



**CAMBRIDGESHIRE
& PETERBOROUGH**
COMBINED AUTHORITY

CAMBRIDGESHIRE & PETERBOROUGH COMBINED AUTHORITY – OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DRAFT MINUTES

Date: Monday, 25 July 2022

Time: 11:00

Location: Pathfinder House, Huntingdon

Members:

Cllr D Dew	Huntingdonshire District Council
Cllr M Hassall	Huntingdonshire District Council
Cllr L Dupre	East Cambridgeshire District Council
Cllr A Sharp	East Cambridgeshire District Council
Cllr M Atkins	Cambridgeshire County Council
Cllr S Count	Cambridgeshire County Council
Cllr D Baigent	Cambridge City Council
Cllr S Smith	Cambridge City Council
Cllr A Coles	Peterborough City Council
Cllr A Iqbal	Peterborough City Council
Cllr A Miscandlon	Fenland District Council
Cllr A Hay	Fenland District Council
Cllr G Harvey	South Cambridgeshire District Council
Cllr P Fane	South Cambridgeshire District Council

Officers:

Gordon Mitchell	Interim Chief Executive Officer
Jodie Townsend*	Interim Head of Democratic Services
Fliss Miller	Interim Associate Skills Director
Steve Clark*	SRO LGF and Market Insight & Evaluation
Rob Emery*	Business Board S151 & Dept.S73 Combined Authority
Reena Roojam	Lawyer, Combined Authority
Rob Fox	Interim Governance Officer, Combined Authority
Joanna Morley	Interim Governance Officer, Combined Authority

*denotes attendance via Zoom

1. Apologies for absence

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Cllr Goldsack, Cllr Robertson and Cllr Van de Weyer. Cllr Count attended as substitute for Cllr Goldsack, Cllr Smith attended as substitute for Cllr Robertson and Cllr Fane attended as substitute for Cllr Van de Weyer.

2. Declarations of Interest

- 2.1 No declarations of interest were made.

3. Public questions

- 3.1 No public questions had been received

4 Minutes of the Previous Meeting and Action Log

- 4.1 The minutes of the meeting held on the 13 June 2022 were approved as a correct record.
- 4.2 Cllr Hay raised the issue of the outstanding Transport Update item noted in the Action Log and queried the why the bus review had been paused but Overview and Scrutiny had not been informed of this.
- 4.3 Cllr Count queried the delay to the Climate Change item and why it had been moved from September to November, given the current press coverage on the issue, especially pertaining to the Warmer Homes Grant monies that had been handed back and the failure to install electric charging points.
- 4.4 The Chair acknowledged the concerns raised and asked that they be further discussed under the work programming agenda item.

5. Improvement Framework

- 5.1 Gordon Mitchell, Interim Chief Executive introduced the report outlining the recommendations that would be made to the Board at their meeting on Wednesday.
- 5.2 One of the proposals the paper laid out was for the CA to voluntarily undertake, with external assistance, a self-assessment exercise which would translate into the development of a comprehensive Improvement Plan. This was to reassure the Department of Levelling up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and to avoid their further intervention and the possible appointment of Commissioners.
- 5.3 There was already a line in the Budget to pay for unforeseen issues and the Interim Chief Executive would be requesting approval by the Board that up to £750,000 of this fund be applied to the Improvement work, including the self-assessment exercise. It was highlighted at this point that if DLUHC intervened and appointed Commissioners then the CA would have to pay for them at significant cost.
- 5.4 Members welcomed Mr Mitchell to the CA and fully supported the delegations to him that were recommended in the report to enable him to deliver against the improvement plan.

- 5.5 Cllr Count asked what specific action was being taken in regard to the Mayor's office and the whistleblowing complaint as he felt that the report, in highlighting concerns about the Board behaviour, had taken the focus away from this. The Chief Executive responded that it was not the intention to omit anything in this report in relation to the safeguarding of staff. A series of safeguarding initiatives had been put in place including formal processes that had been changed and the new member officer protocol that was being introduced. Mr Mitchell also referenced his request that authority be delegated to him for a six-month period to cover the recruitment and appointment of staff so that he could immediately build the capacity of the senior management team. This recruitment of experienced officers would better support middle managers and offer an enhanced level of protection for staff.
- 5.6 Cllr Atkins expressed concerns that the use of interims was not ideal for delivering on a long-term strategic vision and that there was no sense of what would happen after 6 months. In response, the Chief Executive felt that the immediate issue was one of 'putting the fire out'. The use of interim staff would help to do this but then would go on to bring in their expertise and experience to create more stable conditions where objectives could be delivered. Prospective permanent candidates, doing their due diligence on the organisation, could then see that the tide had turned. There would be a subtle judgement on the timing of recruitment to permanent positions and this would vary for each one.
- 5.7 The actions laid out in the report, and also events happening in Government, would lead up to a natural review point in mid-September to see whether the CA was on track and whether the decisions being taken were correct.
- 5.8 In response to questions from the Committee about how Members could support the recommendations in the review of Governance and improve the ways of working, the Chief Executive reiterated that there was a role for the Mayor and all Members to help in creating the context in which good governance happened so that it happened in the right way, with the right level of information supplied at the right time, and that there was appropriate challenge. Ensuring good behaviour and respect in the different arenas should not however interfere with robust questioning and proper debate, and having clear processes in place, such as the member Officer Protocol, would help with this.
- 5.9 Jodie Townsend, the Interim Head of Governance, added that the review was about examining what barriers there were to the CA making effective decisions and that how the Board behaved was just one of several contributory factors. The review also looked at whether there were the necessary building blocks in place to allow the CA to operate effectively and the review had concluded that currently these were not in place. From a scrutiny perspective it was difficult to hold the Authority to account if there was a lack of clarity around what the objectives were. The role of O & S would therefore be very significant in scrutinising the decisions made in relation to the improvement journey. There would also be an opportunity for the Committee to have an improvement focus in all of its scrutiny activity so that it was a basis for every topic that was being reviewed.
- 5.10 Mr Townsend also commented that the Committee could look to improve the scrutiny function itself and to assess what was needed to make it easier for the Committee to undertake its role, for example, greater access to information above that already provided. Strengthening the scrutiny function could also involve looking at what the organisation was doing to improve its internal system of controls such as how it reported performance information and how reports were written for the Committee.

- 5.11 In response to a question on whether decision making would become further removed from the public if too much weight was put on the Chief Executive Group recommended in the report, Mr Townsend felt that Chief Executives could play a crucial enabling role in supporting Members to build the consensus that was currently missing.
- 5.12 From his experience of working with other Combined Authorities, Mr Townsend had identified that the CPCA lacked 'policy space' where politicians could come together and have the conversations that they were currently having at Board but which would be better had out of the public eye. Members could then disagree but also find common ground on which to develop policy.
- 5.13 The Chief Executive group could play a significant role in briefing not just the leaders but their wider organisations about what was happening in the CA. The Group could also feed in upwards on the work their individual councils were doing.
- 5.14 To address the issues raised in the letter from the External Auditor and the correspondence from DHULC, Cllr Smith spoke of the need to concentrate on the 3 priorities of Mission, Culture and Governance. He felt that the CA did not appear to have a supported and owned purpose, that changing the culture of an organisation was not a quick fix as it was so pervasive and that the Governance Review provided an excellent framework but needed a further edit to focus on the key elements of change that needed to be put in place.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the report and gave their support to the recommendations to the Board outlined in the report.

6. Business and Skills Update

- 6.1 Fliss Miller, Interim Associate Director for Skills introduced the report the purpose of which was to update members of the Committee on the strategic direction and performance of existing contracts within Business and Skills at the Combined Authority. Steve Clarke, SRO LGF and Market Insights & Evaluation, was also in attendance to answer members' questions
- 6.2 Ms Miller apologised that the paper was produced in haste and therefore, on review felt that some additional information could have been provided, or the information presented in a different way, that would perhaps have been helpful to Councillors.
- 6.3 Cllr Coles was concerned that the number of jobs created was very low against the forecasts shown and that there was too much focus on the many strategies rather than delivery. In response Ms Miller assured members that the individual strategies were all linked and aligned with the overarching Employment and Skills Strategy, and the Economic Growth Strategy. In addition, the number of jobs shown was perhaps being taken out of context as, for example, the Local Growth Fund was on a 10-year trajectory and the Business Board was in fact ahead of targeted performance in terms of jobs.
- 6.4 All of the data in the report was up to date and correct but Ms Miller agreed that the report could have been presented in a better way with more information behind the data.

- 6.5 It was confirmed that at Q1 of 2021/22 there was a 66% increase on apprenticeship starts compared to the previous year.
- 6.6 In terms of the Levelling Up Fund (LUF) bid an internal competition was run between the Business and Transport teams to select its preferred transport option and the Peterborough Station Quarter had been chosen. The bid totalled £48m and had been submitted.
- 6.7 Work was being done with all the colleges to establish a regional curriculum to get them to work as a system rather than individual entities so that there was not duplication of provision, and resources were used in the most effective way.
- 6.8 A piece of work that had been done on the most deprived postcodes had already been presented to the Board and would be provided for the Committee.
- 6.9 Ms Miller would also provide the Committee with specific information on the types of skills training offered to the unemployed and not looking for work but, as they were the people furthest away from work her understanding was that it would concentrate on such things as confidence building.
- 6.10 An area of specific challenge for matching a school with an Enterprise Advisor was for those schools with high levels of SEND provision but the department continuously ran a campaign to attract more advisors into the network and were working with the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and disability confident employers to bring people in.
- 6.11 As a Combined Authority, a number of marketing techniques were used to push information out about top-up funding in the most deprived areas but it was also the responsibility of the individual colleges, who were in receipt of the additional uplift, to target those learners.
- 6.12 For different programmes there were different things that the department could benchmark against eg. statistical neighbours or national trends and these would be brought in as part of the implementation plan for the Employment and Skills Strategy.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the Committee note the Business and Skills Update Report.

ACTIONS:

Ms Miller to provide the Committee with:

1. Information on how the relatively most deprived areas in the sub region were defined.
2. Specific information on the types of skills training offered to the 'unemployed and not looking for work' learners.

7. Budget setting Process

- 7.1 Jodie Townsend, Interim Head of Governance, introduced the report the purpose of which was to set out a proposal for consideration that would allow the Committee more involvement in the budget setting process moving forward.
- 7.2 More involvement in the budget setting would enable the Committee to add more value to the process and hopefully move the organisation into a position where it automatically factored scrutiny into its business planning process with clear roles and responsibilities outlined.
- 7.3 There was now another budgetary responsibility for Scrutiny which was making sure any budget had the ability to deliver the improvement plan.
- 7.4 Members welcomed the report and proposed that the reserve meeting date in August be used, in part, to prepare for the September meeting.
- 7.5 The Chair proposed that the Committee appoint a Lead member for Finance and Budgetary issues. Cllr Sharp had previously volunteered to undertake this role and the Committee unanimously agreed his appointment.
- 7.6 In response to the concerns expressed by Members about the timing and the lack of information in the reports received last year, Mr Townsend responded that the earlier the Committee was involved in the process the better as it would allow time to rectify any 'gaps' in the information. If the Committee still had any concerns about the information received, then these should be reported to the Board. Mr Townsend also stated that he would expect the Committee to receive all the information they required including any line-by-line review, as this could allow the Committee to develop key themes and strategic lines of enquiry.

RESOLVED:

That:

- a) The Committee agree the budget scrutiny process for 2022/23 as set out in paragraph 3.3 of the report.
- b) Cllr Sharp be appointed the Lead Member for Finance and Budgetary issues.
- c) The 26th August reserve meeting date be used, in part, to receive an early report on the budget and in preparation for further discussion on the budget at the Committee's September meeting.

8. Combined Authority Forward Plan

- 8.1 The Chair invited the Lead members to provide any updates.
- 8.2 Cllr Atkins as Lead Member for Climate Change advised the Committee that a number of Climate Change business cases would be heard at the Board meeting on Wednesday and that the LAD2 grant and Sustainable Warmth Programme, would be debated at the Board meeting in August. He suggested that these last two items, as they related to Cllr Count's concerns raised earlier in the meeting under the Action Log agenda item, be considered at the Committee's additional meeting in August, ahead of the Board meeting.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the Forward Plan

9. Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme

- 9.1 The Committee had commented earlier on the outstanding actions relating to Transport and Climate Change and agreed that these issues should be added to the agenda and further discussed at the additional meeting in August.
- 9.2 In Cllr Van de Weyer's absence, the Chair asked the Committee to note the Housing scoping document and for the Committee to agree to add this review to the work programme.

RESOLVED:

That:

1. The reserve meeting date of 26 August be confirmed and the following items added to the agenda:
 - Preparatory Budget Report
 - The Improvement Framework
 - Update on Warm Homes and The Local Authority Delivery Scheme (LAD2)
 - Update on the Bus Review, including the 905 Service and the DRT service
2. The scoping document for the review of the Governance of the CPCA's Housing Programme be noted and that it be added to the Work Programme.

10. Combined Authority Board Agenda

- 10.1 No questions were put forward to be asked at the CA Board this month.

11. Date of next meeting

- 11.1 Friday 26 August 2022 at 11am. Venue: Pathfinder House, Huntingdon.

Meeting Closed: 1.18pm