



Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Board	Agenda Item
20 September 2023	8

Title:	Improvement Plan update
Report of:	Angela Probert, Interim Director Improvement Programme
Lead Member:	Mayor – Dr Nick Johnson
Public Report:	Yes
Key Decision:	No
Voting Arrangements:	No vote required

Recommendations:

A	To note the progress on the key areas of concern identified by the External Auditor in June 2022 and in the Best Value Notice received in January 2023
B	To note the observations on progress following the meeting of the Independent Improvement Board meeting on 11 September

Strategic Objective(s):

The proposals within this report fit under the following strategic objective(s):

x	Achieving ambitious skills and employment opportunities
x	Achieving good growth
x	Increased connectivity
x	Enabling resilient communities
x	Achieving Best Value and High Performance

The identified improvements set out in this report to meet concerns of the External Auditor and Best Value Notice will support the Combined Authority achieve best value and enable the delivery of agreed priorities and objectives.

1. Purpose

1.1	The report updates the Board on the progress in July and August against the key concerns and observations identified by the External Auditor in June and October 2022, and February 2023 and the Best Value Notice received in January 2023.
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2. Proposal

2.1 This report sets out for the CA Board the progress made on identified areas of improvement. This update has been presented to the Independent Improvement Board (IIB) meeting on 11 September and a note from the Chair of the IIB will be circulated to CA Board members in advance of the meeting scheduled for 20 September setting out areas of assurance and areas where further focus is required.

2.2 **Improvement Plan progress**

Overall, the programme at the end of August is rated as 'Green', meaning 'successful delivery of the Improvement Plan to time, cost and quality appears to be highly likely', reflecting the positive trends across the five themes set out in the highlight report.

The Improvement Group, chaired by the Executive Director, Resources and Performance continues to assess progress against the agreed plan and address any programme issues or risks.

The Improvement Group has also identified the key links between deliverables set out in the Improvement Plan to ensure a programme wide focus on delivery is in place and dependencies and risks are managed effectively.

Progress reports continue to be shared with the CA Board, Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and Audit and Governance Committee. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has agreed a series of 'deep dives' of the Improvement activity. At the meeting in July it looked in detail at 'Procurement' and the planned improvement activity under way. At the meeting in September it will look at 'Project plans and delivery.

Set out below is detail of the activity delivered against the Improvement Plan for each improvement theme.

2.3 **Governance and decision making (Green)**

- The Procurement Code was approved by Audit & Governance Committee (A&G) on 7th July and Combined Authority Board on 26th July.
- Officer / member protocols were agreed at the CA Board on 26th July.
- Financial regulations have been agreed.
- Informal meetings with Overview & Scrutiny Committee (O&S) have taken place to support the development of their requirements.
- Officer support for the O&S is under review.
- Constitutional changes have been agreed and the new constitution is on the CA website.
- Member training is in place and underway.
- Constituent authorities have been asked to nominate representatives for the new committees.
- Constituent authorities have been asked to nominate representative for Advisory groups.
- Engagement with Project delivery workstream is ongoing to ensure Single Assurance Framework (SAF) alignment.

2.4 **Procurement (Green)**

- Revised Procurement Strategy has been agreed and signed off.
- Revised Procurement Policy and Procedure has been agreed and signed off.
- Revised Procurement Code has been agreed and signed off.
- Operating Model for Procurement function has been agreed and signed off.
- CA Board on the 26th July agreed to recruit to the new Procurement structure with permanent staff.
- Grant funding agreements have been drafted and are awaiting approval.
- Procurement of E-Learning Procurement fundamentals training for all staff has been researched and meetings held with 11 providers.
- Discussions with training providers to deliver the high-level Procurement & Contract Management training have taken place

2.5	<p>Project plans and delivery (Green / Amber)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DLUHC engagement has taken place on how to move forward with the required government clearance process for the Single Assurance Framework (SAF). The advice received is that the Local Growth & Assurance Unit within DLUHC will not be able to provide support for this until mid-September. Discussions with DLUHC have taken place to ensure resource is available to seek DLUHC, DfT, DfE Director approval of the SAF in September/ October/ November with an estimated four to six weeks being required for this process. • The draft performance management framework has been socialised via constituent authority engagement through the Partner Working Group throughout July and into August. Comments made (and report in the July improvement update note) have been incorporated into the proposed approach and documentation. The document has been shared with the Corporate Management Team, constituent Chief Executives and is due to be shared with Audit and Governance Committee and Leaders. It is due to go to Leaders on 30 August, to Audit and Governance on 08 September and on to CA Board on 20 September. • The risk management framework (RMF) has now been completed in draft and includes the latest risk appetite statement. Over August it has been shared with constituent Chief Executives and Leaders Strategy meeting in August.
2.6	<p>Partnership working (Green/Amber)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns regarding partnership working were set out in the Best Value Notice with the expectation that the Combined Authority significantly improved local partnership working arrangements, built on a unity of ambition and shared purpose. • Significant progress has been made in addressing the identified concerns relating to local partnership working arrangements across the constituent councils and broader stakeholder groups. • Stronger and more collegiate partnership working is reported across the constituent councils in areas covering the development of the proposed refresh of the CPIER and shaping the future vision. Deeper devolution has enabled the Combined Authority demonstrate strong and effective partnership both across constituent councils and also as part of the M10 Group of MCAs and the GLA. • The Corporate Management Team continue to meet with constituent authority leadership teams and role model collegiate behaviours and partnership working across the CA; this being recognised and reflected in the recent staff survey. • The rescoped focus on partnership working will be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ That it is principles not a framework that needs to be embedded ○ That there is now substantial evidence that partnership working isn't broken across the local authorities and the MCA ○ That the further work commissioned outside of the Improvement Programme will take on the wider developments of the partnership landscape as part of mapping our delivery systems, essential for further devolution, but more generally in any case.
2.7	<p>Confidence, culture and capacity (Green)</p> <p>Ambition and priorities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CA Board in July approved the funding to enable the commencement of the State of the Region Review and the development of a Vision for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. • The new approach to Corporate Performance reporting taken to July CA Board. Comments have been received, significant progress noted and on track for Q1 reporting at September CA Board. <p>Leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning of Member Development sessions has commenced with a review of existing sessions across the constituent councils to explore options for joined up approaches and to avoid duplication. Options for further briefing sessions for members are being explored, following the positive feedback from the All-Member Induction. • Member Induction Pack launched.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A series of seminars for internal staff which are being led by Executive Directors has commenced. <p>Values and behaviours</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launched the first “You said, we listened” staff video, highlighting feedback and resulting actions from the last staff survey, demonstrating areas of improvement and how we plan to address remaining areas of concern for staff. • Scheduled the next staff conference and issued a “save the date” card. • Options are being explored for the next staff survey to ensure that we can incorporate the lessons learned from previous surveys. • Several HR Policies were approved by HR Committee in the period. These focussed on and introduced policies regarding equality, diversity and inclusion, flexible working, professional development, menopause support and pregnancy loss. Updates to compassionate and family leave were also included.
2.8	<p>Engagement with the Independent Improvement Board</p> <p>The Chief Executive and senior officers continue to engage on a regular basis with the Independent Improvement Board and provide detailed reports on progress against the identified areas of improvement. The new Chair, Richard Carr, continues to meet with a range of stakeholders across the Combined Authority and other key stakeholders.</p> <p>The latest formal meeting of the Independent Improvement Board was held on 11 September where the Board received a formal report on progress over July and August and CA Board members and Chief Executives attended for a discussion on devolution.</p> <p>The Chair of the Independent Improvement Board will provide a note to CA Board members on areas of assurance and any areas for further attention in advance of the CA Board on 20 September.</p> <p>The Chair of the Independent Improvement Board and the Chief Executive of the Combined Authority will meet with the Department for Levelling Up and Communities on 21 September to discuss progress the progress made against the key areas of concern set out in the Best Value letter received in January 2023.</p>
2.9	<p>Conclusion of investigations and safeguarding of staff</p> <p>Indications are that significant progress will be made over September and October with the conclusion being reached by the end of the calendar year</p>
2.10	<p>The Improvement highlight report attached as Appendix A sets out the detailed activity for each theme and identifies risks and mitigations.</p>

3. Background

3.1	<p>The proposals set out in this report build on the detailed report presented to Board in May 2023 that set out the reframed Improvement Plan and key deliverables .</p>
3.2	<p>The Combined Authority Board meeting in May agreed the improvement plan to directly address the concerns raised by The External Auditor in June and October 2022, February 2023 and the Best Value Notice received in January 2023:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Governance and decision making 2. Project Plans and delivery 3. Procurement 4. Partnership working 5. Confidence, culture and capacity <p>And also:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Improvement plan progress 7. Independent Improvement Board engagement 8. Conclusion of code of conduct investigation and safeguarding of staff

3.3	The Independent Improvement Board (IIB) in May agreed the 'RAG rating' system to report progress against identified areas of activity set out in paragraph 2.3 – 2.7. Activity reported to the IIB on 11 September and in this report uses the agreed RAG to measure progress against agreed outcomes and planned activity. The Improvement highlight report and RAG descriptions are set out in Appendix A.
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4. Appendices

4.1	Appendix A – Improvement Highlight report, July and August 2023
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5. Implications

Financial Implications

5.1	The Board in July approved an additional £250K to fund the Improvement Programme to the end of January 2024 and it is anticipated that these funds will cover all the required activity to that point.
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Legal Implications

5.2	<p>The CPCA is required to consider the key areas of concern identified by the External Auditor in June 2022 and in the Best Value Notice received in January 2023. The CPCA Board has considered the recommendations and what, if any, action will be taken in response. In response, the CPCA Board agreed the Improvement plan in October 2022.</p> <p>The Combined Authority Board owns the Improvement Plan and as part of the process regular feedback is provided as in this report.</p> <p>As a Combined Authority, the CPCA operates within a highly legislated and controlled environment. Chapter 4 of the Constitution sets out the functions reserved to the Board. Paragraph 1.1 of Chapter 4 reserves certain functions to the Combined Authority Board including the adoption of, and any amendment to or withdrawal of certain plans and strategies including certain strategies and plans which the Improvement plan would fall under.</p>
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Public Health Implications

5.3	None
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Environmental & Climate Change Implications

5.4	None
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Other Significant Implications

5.5	None
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Background Papers

5.6	<p>CA Board report 22 March</p> <p>CA Board report 31 May 2023</p> <p>Best Value Notice</p> <p>External Auditor letter</p> <p>Best value standards and intervention draft guidance (publishing.service.gov.uk)</p>
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