

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Independent Improvement Board

(Revised) Terms of Reference

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Improvement Board was established by the Combined Authority Board in October 2022 to provide challenge and support to the issues identified in the Improvement Framework report presented to the Combined Authority Board on 27 July 2022.

The Combined Authority was issued a Best Value Notice on 24 January 2023 and the identified issues to be addressed were a focus for the Independent Improvement Board, alongside the concerns identified in the External Auditors letter dated June 2022.

Review

The current agreed terms of reference proposed that the Independent Improvement Board would be in place for 12 months from January 2023. A Best Value Notice issued in January 2023 was a focus for the Board in addition to the concerns set out in the External Auditors letter.

Significant progress has been made in delivering the identified improvements set out in the agreed Improvement plan and this is acknowledged by both the Independent Improvement Board and also the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities.

It is also recognised that there is more to do.

In January 2024 a further Best Value Notice was issued for a six month period which set out the expectation on the Combined Authority to continue to improve and, specifically, to:

- Continue with the independent Improvement Board; making full use of its support and engaging with its recommendations over the next six months.
- Continue to implement and embed the changes agreed by the Combined Authority Board as part of the improvement plan.
- Continue to implement and monitor cultural change across the organisation, for both officers and members, with a focus on measurable outcomes.
- Commit, through strong partnership working at both officer and member level, to develop the strategic priorities and aspirations for the area that will benefit local residents, and a credible delivery strategy for progressing these. We hope that this can be achieved through consensus but, if not all stakeholders are ready to fully engage, the opportunity should be left open for them to do so when they feel ready to. This work is also important in informing CPCA's approach to further devolution.

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- Continue to engage regularly with the Department at official level throughout the period of this Notice.

The Independent Improvement Board recognises the role it can play in supporting the Combined Authority deliver on the areas set out above and will therefore stay in place for a further period of time; to be reviewed after six months.

Set out below is the proposed revised Terms of Reference.

1. Purpose

The revised purpose of the Improvement Board is:

- To provide external advice, support, challenge and expertise to Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority to ensure focus, grip, pace and effective change on key areas identified in the Best Value Notice January 2024 and any remaining areas of concern set out in the External Auditors letter, June 2022.
- To support the Combined Authority Board in the delivery of identified areas of improvement set out above.
- To provide assurance to the Combined Authority Board and external agencies of the progress on delivering the identified key outcomes and associated activity set out in the revised Improvement plan.
- To identify and share learning and best practice with Members and Officers on all activities included in the Authority's Improvement Plan, including identification of development opportunities for both members and officers.

This will involve:

- Engaging with officers, Combined Authority Board members and external agencies to share insight, expertise and experience.
- Ensuring there is a single, integrated, and holistic Improvement Plan that sets out clearly the key areas of improvement that can be clearly understood and communicated internally and externally.
- To seek and receive regular reports on progress and evidence against identified areas and the effectiveness of actions taken.
- Providing regular advice, challenge, and support to the Combined Authority on the identified improvement activities, and in particular on delivery of the recommendations in the External Auditor letter, June 2022, the Best Value Notice January 2023 and any subsequent updates.

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- Providing written commentary on the Council's progress to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on the Combined Authority's progress.
- Investigating any activity within its terms of reference and seeking any information it requires from any member of staff (in compliance with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority's Member/Officer Protocol); who will be directed to co-operate with any request made by the Improvement Board.
- Obtaining independent legal or other independent professional advice and to secure the attendance of third parties with relevant experience if it considers this necessary or beneficial to its work.

2. Accountability

- The Independent Improvement Board will be accountable to the Combined Authority Board and respond as required; through agreed reporting mechanisms and timelines to requests for information on progress, key risks and shared learning.
- The Independent Improvement Board will receive reports from the Chief Executive on a regular and timely manner in line with agreed reporting timelines.
- The Independent Improvement Board will ensure the Chairs of Audit & Governance Committee and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive regular updates on all improvement action against agreed timelines.
- The Independent Improvement Board will provide the Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities with an update on a quarterly basis on the level of assurance and confidence it has on the progress being made against key areas of concern.

3. Membership of Independent Improvement Board

Members:

A balance of Members and officers to bring a balance of expertise and experience:

- Independent Chair
- Independent Deputy Chair
- Independent external Member representative of political groups or Independent external members deemed to bring appropriate experience and expertise

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Attendees:

- Chief Executive
 - Interim Programme Director, Transformation

 - Combined Authority Board members and constituent council Chief Executives; as determined by the Chair
- Others by invitation

4. Working arrangements:

- Changes to membership can be agreed by the Independent Improvement Board.
- The Board may invite anyone who it believes will be useful in achieving its aims and purpose to attend meetings.
- The Board may request reports from officers and ask that officers attend if required.
- Individuals may raise matters directly with the Board if they are within the agreed remit of the Board through appropriate protocols.
- A&G and O&S Chairs may request to attend meetings on behalf of their committees.
- Democratic management of the meetings will be carried out by officers of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority.
- The Board will be supported by the programme office to ensure that the revised programme plan is proactively tracked, kept up to date and that issues and identified risks are managed on a day-to-day basis through officers.
- Any costs associated with the Board will be met by Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority and the Local Government Association.

5. Improvement Board meetings:

- It is proposed that the Board will be in place for six months from January 2024 and will be reviewed at this time in line with the Best Value Notice review

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- The Board will continue to meet on a bi-monthly basis for six months when a review will take place and the future frequency of meetings agreed.
- Discussion and interaction during the Board meetings will be private to allow and enable constructive dialogue; officers and members being treated with respect and courtesy.
- The minutes of the Board will not be public as the Independent Improvement Board is an advisory board.

6. Venue for meetings

- To be agreed

7. Agenda

- At each meeting the Board will agree the content of the agenda for the next meeting. Standard agenda items should include:
 - Actions from previous meeting
 - Matters considered by the Chair to aid the working of the Board in pursuing its aims
 - Chief Executive's report on progress against the revised improvement plan
 - Communication (if any) from the External Auditor or Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities
 - Progress and any issues to be communicated to key stakeholders (including staff)
 - Matters to be reported to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Board
 - Additional items for the agenda for the next meeting
 - Confirmation of date, time and venue for the next meeting

8. Review

These Terms of Reference will be reviewed after six months.