

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Annual Report:
2023/24

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CAMBRIDGESHIRE
& PETERBOROUGH
COMBINED AUTHORITY

Combined authorities need strong governance to work well.... A part of that strong governance is overview and scrutiny' CfGS 2017.

FOREWORD FROM THE CHAIR & VICE CHAIR, COUNCILLOR CHARLOTTE CANE & COUNCILLOR JOHN FOX

I am pleased to present the Overview & Scrutiny (O&S) Committee's Annual Report for the year 2023/24. I would like to thank the Members of the Committee for their hard work, knowledge and understanding of the issues that have come before the Committee, as well as the support they have provided to myself and the Vice Chair. I would also like to thank the Governance Manager and the various officers who have supported the Committee throughout the year, and welcome the expertise of the contributors who have spoken to the Committee.

It has been a privilege to chair this Committee which scrutinises decisions and issues affecting the everyday lives of the people of the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough area. This report highlights the key work it has undertaken in the past year.

Conducting effective scrutiny will always require us to move beyond simple challenge, working instead as a critical friend to the Mayor and the decision-making Committees. As Members we are ambassadors for our own communities, and as such are able to give genuine local insight. Members of the Committee have worked constructively and positively to add real value to the areas the Committee has considered.

As a Committee we have looked at many issues including the Combined Authority's budget and the Mayor's budget and have undertaken deep dives into the workstreams of the Combined Authority's improvement plan. I should recognise that the Members of the Committee have given a significant commitment as many are also Members of parish councils, city or district councils and the County Council. I would like to particularly thank all those who have volunteered for Lead member and Rapporteur roles. I hope, and expect, that the level of commitment shown by Members of the Committee will continue in years to come and that our ambitions as a Committee can develop still further.

Cllr Charlotte Cane

Cllr John Fox

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INTRODUCTION

The Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016 specified that all Combined Authorities establish at least one Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The CPCA O&S Committee was established by the Combined Authority in May 2017.

The role of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is to:

- ❖ Review or scrutinise decisions and actions taken by the Combined Authority or the Mayor.
- ❖ Make reports or recommendations to the Combined Authority Board
- ❖ Make reports or recommendations to the Mayor: with respect to the discharge of any functions that are the responsibility of the authority and on matters that affect the authority's area or the inhabitants of the area;
- ❖ In the exercise of its functions set out in the Constitution, the power of the Committee shall include the doing of anything which is calculated to facilitate or is conducive or incidental to the discharge of those functions.

The key benefits of Overview and Scrutiny at the CPCA may be seen as:

Providing an open and transparent forum in which to examine whether policies and strategies of the Combined Authority are meeting the needs of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

The Committee has the power of influence; it can make evidence-based recommendations that are informed by key stakeholders and partners of the Combined Authority, expert advice, public opinion and members experiences and knowledge – acting as a ‘critical friend’

The committee can challenge Combined Authority Board and the Mayor’s decisions. The Committee can ‘call-in’ a decision which has been made but not yet implemented. The Committee can:

- a) direct that a decision is not to be implemented while it is under review by the Committee, and
- b) recommend that the decision be reconsidered.

The O&S Committee’s Terms of Reference are at Annex A of this report.

MEMBERSHIP AND MEETINGS

Meetings

During 2023/24, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on the following dates:

- 19th June 2023
- 24th July 2023
- 18th September 2023
- 27th November 2023
- 9th January 2024
- 29th January 2024
- 18th March 2024

The Committee met seven times in total and all meetings were quorate.

Membership

The membership comprises fourteen elected members with two members representing each of the Combined Authority's constituent councils. The political balance of the Committee reflects as closely as possible the political make up from across the County

The members for 2023/2024 were:

Table 1: Councillor O&S Committee Membership 2023/24 as at 1st March 2024:

Labour	Conservative	Liberal Democrats	Peterborough First
Cllr Griffin (Cambridge City)	Cllr Fitzgerald (Peterborough City)	Cllr Bradnam (Cambridgeshire County)	Cllr John Fox (Peterborough City)
Cllr Smart (Cambridge City)	Cllr Neish (Huntingdonshire)	Cllr Fane (South Cambs)	
	Cllr Goldsack (Cambridgeshire County)	Cllr Van de Weyer (South Cambs)	
	Cllr Hay (Fenland)	Cllr Cane (East Cambs)	
	Cllr Davis (Fenland)	Cllr Hassall (Huntingdonshire)	
	Cllr Brown (East Cambs)		

RAPPORTEURS

Under the current governance arrangements, decision making is distributed between the Combined Authority Board and the Thematic Committees. There are three Thematic Committees, Employment & Skills, Environment & Sustainable Communities and Transport & Infrastructure. With significant decisions being taken by the Thematic Committees, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has a role in scrutinising the work of those Committees. In order to do so, appointed members of O&S lead in respect of the work of each Thematic Committee; these members are called rapporteurs. Rapporteurs can attend the thematic committees and can submit questions on behalf of the O&S committee. The rapporteurs can also meet with relevant officers and Lead Members of the CA Board to discuss upcoming reports.

In addition to shadowing the work of the thematic committees the rapporteurs can advise the rest of the committee on areas of interest that the O&S Committee may wish to scrutinise. By utilising the forward plan and identifying upcoming reports that O&S can feed into at an early stage and therefore add value to the work of the Combined Authority.

Rapporteurs

Committee	Rapporteurs
Environment & Sustainable Communities Committee	Cllr Hassall & Cllr Goldsack
Transport & Infrastructure Committee	Cllr Neish & Cllr Van De Weyer
Employment & Skills Committee	Tim Griffin & Currently vacant

KEY ACTIVITIES

The O&S Committee's key actions and recommendations during the year included:

- ❖ The Committee accepted the 'new ways of working' for the O&C Committee recommended following the governance review undertaken – the new ways of working involved the adoption of a new forward looking strategic pre-scrutiny way of working. Work has been undertaken by members and officers to adopt new processes with further work still to be done in the upcoming year. The Committee's new ways of working has been recognised as a published case study by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny as an example of good governance, and demonstrating how a tailored approach to scrutiny, supported by specialized tools, can elevate decision-making, foster strategic partnerships, and enhance accountability. [CPCA Scrutiny Case Study](#)
- ❖ The Committee introduced holding informal O&S meetings two weeks prior to their formal meetings to review corporate KPIs, the Forward Plan, Performance and Major Project dashboards to identify work programme focus
- ❖ The Committee received regular updates on the Improvement Plan and carried out deep dives into the key workstreams. Following the deep dive into culture, capacity and confidence work stream and a particular focus on HR matters following suggestions from members, officers will now report information to HR Committee on a regular basis.
- ❖ The Mayor attended two meetings of the O&S Committee to answer questions from members on a range of matters.
- ❖ The Committee held an extraordinary meeting to discuss and make recommendations to the CA Board on the Budget Consultation.
- ❖ The Committee received and reviewed the Bus Strategy and the bus reform review and put questions to the Chair of Transport & Infrastructure Committee on the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan and the bus strategy and bus reform review.
- ❖ The Committee invited the Chair for Skills & Employment Committee to answer questions on the Skills strategy.
- ❖ The Committee reviewed, amended the Access to Information Protocol and recommended it for approval to the CA Board.
- ❖ The Committee discussed and questioned the Mayor on proposals for a Mayoral Precept and requested that the CA continue to consult with local communities on

- ❖ bus routes; that a set of KPI's be created; and that details of the bus routes, with costings, be provided; also that it was recognised that while buses were important and did need to be improved that other forms of public transport be considered.
- ❖ The Chair for the Committee started to attend all CA Board meetings to provide feedback from the Committee.

IMPROVEMENT WORK

The Committee's work this year has been largely dominated by the work being undertaken by the Combined Authority in response to the letter received from the External Auditors in June 2022.

The Authority's external auditors wrote to the Chair of the Audit & Governance Committee on 1 June 2022 to notify him of their judgement that a value for money risk exists in the form of significant weakness in Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority's governance arrangements. The external auditor letter identified actions for the Authority to take.

It recommended that:

- ensuring the safeguarding of the Authority's staff was of paramount importance
- the Authority urgently ensure that it has sufficient appropriate leadership capacity to be able to deliver its objectives and statutory responsibilities
- more formal intervention is required, and expeditious discussions with the Authority's sponsoring department to this end are time critical

The Committee have received updates from the Lead Officers for the Improvement Plan at all of their meetings since June and the Chairs of both O&S Committee and A&G Committee have been working closely with one another to monitor the work being done on the Improvement Plan.

The Committee have carried out deep dives into the following areas of the improvement workstream:

- Procurement
- Project Plans & Delivery
- Confidence, culture & capacity
- Governance & decision making

ATTENDANCE & MEMBER DEVELOPMENT

Attendance

Date of Meeting	Number of members attended	Substitutes sent	Meeting Quorate
19 th June 2023	14	2	Yes
24 th July 2023	14	6	Yes
18 th September 2023	13	0	Yes
27 th November 2023	12	1	Yes
9 th January 2024	10	1	Yes
29 th January 2024	12	1	Yes
18 th March 2024	TBC	TBC	

There was a programme of Members' development sessions through the year involving:

<u>Development Session</u>	<u>Attendance</u>
O&S Ways of Working Workshop	10
KPI Training	11
Subsidiary Companies Training	7
Budget Scrutiny Training	8

Call Ins

There was no occasion for the use of call in this year.

Task & Finish Groups

The Committee did not set up any Task and Finish Groups this year.

LOOKING FORWARD

The O&S Committee will continue to scrutinise the progress made by the CPCA Board and officers to satisfy the ongoing DLUHC concerns and will continue to receive updates on the improvement plan.

The Mayor is scheduled to attend at least two meetings in the next municipal year and also a specific Mayor's Question Time will be held in September.

The Committee have requested that all Chair's for the Thematic Committees attend at least one OSC meeting in the municipal year.

The Committee will be provided with a new report template which should help to focus the committee's enquiries and help to ensure that the necessary information is provided to members in a helpful and succinct manner.

The Committee will aim to utilise the forward plan of the Combined Authority to help inform their work programme and identify areas of strategic importance for consideration. Officers will support this with providing a scoring matrix on items on the forward plan to help determine the most important items and those of greatest impact to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough area. By identifying items early on the Committee should be in a position to really add value into policy formation and upcoming proposals of the Combined Authority.

With the publication of the [Scrutiny Protocol](#) it is clear that scrutiny will need to play an important role in ensuring high levels of accountability required for future devolution deals. The Committee will receive specific strategic scrutiny training and hold a ways of working/work programming workshop before their first meeting in the new municipal year to ensure that future work with the CA Board and senior officers will develop effective engagement of the scrutiny function going forward that will add value to the work of the Combined Authority.

Cllr Charlotte Cane

Chair

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Cllr John Fox

Vice Chair

Overview and Scrutiny Committee