

Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Mayor’s Question Time Session - 11am 22nd November 2021

Topics:

- Mayor’s Priorities
- Affordable Housing

Question received by the O&S Committee:

The Chair and Vice Chair have agreed that the questions on the Mayor’s priorities will be asked first followed by the Affordable Housing topic.

Each question will be read out by the member who submitted it and will be allowed a supplementary follow up question.

Member	Question
Mayors Priorities	
Cllr Doug Dew	<p>What are the Mayor’s priorities?</p> <p>Response: My priorities are to embed the 3c’s message of Compassion, Co-operation and Community across the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough area.</p> <p>I also want to pay particular attention to the fourth C of Climate Change. The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Independent Commission on Climate, chaired by Baroness Brown recently published their final report and I was pleased that the CPCA Board endorsed a proposed framework for action to help tackle the impact of climate change through the Combined Authority’s own work. I am also pleased that the Climate Working Group is set to meet for the first-time next month, and I look forward to working with them on implementing the Commission’s initial recommendations through the creation of an ambitious and comprehensive Action Plan.</p>

	<p>I want to see a fairer, more equitable spread of health outcomes, job prospects, housing, and digital connectivity across the region. For far too long communities within the North of our region, particularly villages and towns within the Fenlands, have been disconnected from the rest of region, through poor transport connections, lack of digital connectivity, and equal job opportunities. I want to work to strengthen and reinvigorate these communities and ensure that our communities do not feel that their postcode defines their opportunities. The devolution deal sets out a goal of doubling our GVA, and this is something I also support and will work to enable through the incorporation of Lifebelt Economics.</p> <p>Part of improving the quality of life of our communities will involve providing an integrated transport system. Better transport connections will broaden employment and education opportunities for our communities. My priority is to introduce a connected low-cost light rail connecting towns across the Fenlands, such as Wisbech and March, Peterborough and remote towns in East Cambs onto Suffolk. With the first cohort of students arriving at ARU Peterborough next year, improving transport connections for Fenland towns to Peterborough and the rest of the region will open a variety of doors, for our young people and wider communities. I also believe that an improved bus network will support connectivity for local villages and towns. By ensuring that these transport methods are sustainable, and by placing greater focus on the incorporation of active travel schemes within our transport plans, I hope for the Combined Authority to take an active role in the fight against climate change. Affordable and social housing also play a role within my priorities, I want to place a focus on using modern methods of construction and retrofitting of existing projects to improve their sustainability. I also want the Combined Authority to play a role in helping to tackle water stress, including the issue of flooding in the North of the region and the Fens, as well as the stress on the chalk streams and water aquifers in the South.</p>
Cllr Van De Weyer	<p>In the summer, in discussion with the Chair and Vice-Chair of this committee, you said that your priorities are: climate change, public health, financial fairness and compassion. It would be of great assistance to this committee's work if you could expand on how you intend to define these priorities, how you will integrate these priorities into the work of the CPCA and how you plan to measure your success in these areas.</p>

	<p>Response:</p> <p>I have put my priorities to the November Board in a refreshed ambition statement for the Combined Authority. This will be subject to consultation alongside the MTFP budget. I am very keen that the O&S Committee should have a look at it and give views, and officers have suggested to your Chair that they would be willing to support a workshop discussion on it. This vision statement puts sustainable growth as the core aim of the Authority and will influence everything it does. The budget and business plan review flow from this ambition. A more inclusive definition of 'good growth' means measuring and reporting on a wide range of indicators, such health and wellbeing, state of environment and progress on reducing greenhouse gas emissions.</p>
Cllr Dupre	<p>You have said that two of your priorities are climate change and financial fairness. What challenges do you foresee in ensuring a just transition to net zero for all communities across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, and how will you address them?</p> <p>Response:</p> <p>I have made it clear that no one should be excluded or left behind as we move to a low carbon future and adapt to more extreme climate events in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The Independent Commission on Climate explored the challenges of a just transition, finding that our more deprived communities are amongst the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. I wholeheartedly support the Commission's recommendations on just transition principles and engaging with our communities.</p> <p>I know that residents need good, affordable options so that they can make changes. This is shaping thinking on the refresh of the local transport and connectivity plan, and is an outcome we need to achieve in the bus service improvement plan.</p> <p>Its not all about funding, but the Commission did highlight the massive scale of public and private investment needed. For too long the needs of the area have not been properly recognised or resourced. As one of the most vulnerable areas to climate change in the UK</p>

	<p>we need the investment to face those challenges, and I am taking that up directly with Ministers.</p>
<p>Cllr Atkins</p>	<p>Following the publication of the CPCA Independent Commission on Climate Change report, would the Mayor recognise the risk that the Combined Authority becomes a well-meaning talking shop on climate issues, and how will he personally ensure that substantive actions follow this work?</p> <p>Response: I am pleased to say the Board has already agreed measures to address the Authority's own operations. This will see changes to the procurement of goods and services, and new climate projects will be considered in the budget refresh. Looking outwards, the Board has also backed closer involvement in the preparation of the Regional Water Plan, a crucial part of addressing future water supply. More actions are being scoped and will be considered through the usual assurance processes of the Authority.</p> <p>I will refer you to my previous answer on putting the sustainable growth ambition statement to the Board, with a wider basket of measures to track progress.</p> <p>At the October Board I was asked a public question about avoiding a climate catastrophe. My answer then, as now, is we have a collective responsibility to mitigate against climate catastrophe, and I will work with the Board and others to safeguard our residents, businesses and natural environment's future.</p>
<p>Affordable Housing</p>	
<p>Cllr Judith Rippeth</p>	<p>Following the loss of a significant part of the housing funds, what continuing role, if any, does the Mayor see for the CA in Housing and affordable housing now?</p> <p>Response: The Mayor notes the priority the Government has placed on social rent properties and intends to focus on working with partners to develop policies which will deliver affordable housing to those in greatest need, as well as pushing for more lower cost homes for</p>

	<p>purchase through planning gain on new development. The CPCA team will also engage in a continuous market engagement process with Homes England as part of their 2021/26 national housing programme.</p>
Cllr Sharp	<p>What are the reasons that the Mayor cancelled the £100,000 homes scheme?</p> <p>Response:</p> <p>The policy to encourage delivery of units was being overtaken by the introduction of national planning policy, specifically the First Homes Policy which had many similarities to the CPCA £100k homes policy but is being rolled out nationwide .</p> <p>The objectives of the £100k homes programme were worthy, but the scale of the delivery was limited and the funding resources that enabled the loans to deliver the majority of the £100k homes opportunities are now no longer available.</p> <p>The Mayor recognises that the national First Homes policy, which came into effect for all planning authorities from 28 June 2021, goes a long way to addressing the demand for affordable housing for sale. This has reinforced the Mayor’s opinion that the CPCA is correct step away from the £100K Homes policy and allow the Government to deliver First Homes at scale directly through the local planning authorities.</p>