



CAMBRIDGESHIRE & PETERBOROUGH COMBINED AUTHORITY – OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DRAFT MINUTES

Date: Monday, 13 June 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 D Baigent	Cambridge City Council
Cllr S Smith	Cambridge City Council
Cllr A Coles	Peterborough City Council
Cllr A Miscandlon	Fenland District Council
Cllr A Hay	Fenland District Council
Cllr G Harvey	South Cambridgeshire District Council
Cllr A Van de Weyer	South Cambridgeshire District Council

Officers:

Roger Thompson	Director of Housing and Development
Jodie Townsend	Interim Head of Democratic Services
Reena Roojam	Lawyer, Combined Authority
Anne Gardiner	Governance Manager (Statutory Scrutiny Officer) Combined Authority
Joanna Morley	Interim Governance Officer, Combined Authority

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The Governance Manager opened the meeting and took the Chair for the first two items on the agenda.

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1. Apologies for absence and declarations of interest

1.1 Apologies were received from Cllr Goldsack and his substitute Cllr Count, and also from Cllr Robertson. Cllr Simon Smith attended as substitute for Cllr Robertson.

No declarations of interest were made.

1.2

Election of Chair of the Committee

2.

2.1 Nominations were invited for the position of Chair of the Committee. Councillor Dupre was proposed by Cllr Baigent and seconded by Cllr Smith, and Cllr Sharp was proposed by Cllr Miscandlon and seconded by Cllr Dew. Cllr Dupre and Cllr Sharp both gave a short speech to members outlining their suitability for the role.

A vote was taken with 7 votes cast for Cllr Dupre and 5 votes cast for Cllr Sharp.

2.2

RESOLVED:

That Cllr Dupre be elected Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2022-23.

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Cllr Dupre took the Chair and thanked Members for choosing to re-elect her

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Election of Vice-Chair of the Committee

3.

3.1 Nominations were invited for the position of Vice-Chair of the Committee. It was proposed by Cllr Van de Weyer and seconded by Cllr Miscandlon that Cllr Sharp be elected as Vice-Chair. There were no other nominations and upon being put to the vote the motion was carried.

RESOLVED:

That Cllr Sharp be elected Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2022-23.

4 Minutes of the Previous Meeting and Action Log

4.1 The minutes of the meeting held on the 28 March 2022 were approved as a correct record.

4.2 There were several outstanding actions in the Action Log which the Chair hoped would be resolved by the time of the next meeting. The Governance Manager assured members that these would be followed up with officers and answers supplied.

5. Public Questions

6.1 No public questions were received.

6. Appointment of Lead Members

- 6.1 Councillor Dupre asked those members who had been Lead members last year whether they would like to continue in post and all agreed to do so. The Committee unanimously approved their appointment.
- 6.2 Cllr Hay agreed to continue as Rapporteur for the Bus Reform Review and, in place of Cllr Davey who was no longer a member of the Committee, Cllr Sharp agreed to take on the rapporteur role for One Cam. This was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee confirm the following appointments:

Lead Member for Transport:	Cllr Baigent
Lead Members for Skills:	Cllr Coles and Cllr Miscandlon
Lead Member for Housing:	Cllr Van de Weyer
Lead Member for Climate Change & Environment:	Cllr Atkins
Lead Member for Business Board:	Cllr Doug Dew
Rapporteur for the Bus Reform Review	Cllr Hay
Rapporteur for One Cam	Cllr Sharp

7. Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme

- 7.1 The Committee received the report which requested that members discuss and agree items that they would like to be added to the work programme for the municipal year 2022-23.
- 7.2 Given that the CPCA was very much in the public eye at present, Cllr Dupre requested that the Committee closely scrutinise the upcoming Governance Review as well as various other issues about the functioning of the CA not covered by the review, over the next six months. This would be alongside the work of the Audit and Governance Committee in overseeing this matter.
- 7.3 Although the Committee would be receiving a Housing update at item 10 of the agenda, Cllr Dupre felt there would be a need for further and more in-depth scrutiny of this issue as for the first four years the CA had a significant budget for Housing but going forward would have no new money and therefore would have no financial contributions to make towards the building of new homes.
- 7.4 Other recommendations put forward by Members included the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan, scrutiny of the budget on a quarterly basis, and the scheduling of the Mayoral Question Times both for scrutiny and the public, as well as regular invites to the Mayor to attend scrutiny committee meetings.
- 7.6 Jodie Townsend, Interim Head of Governance, suggested to members that, as part of reviewing their work programme, they might like to consider some of the key provisional findings of the Governance review, and also the work being done on combined authority scrutiny by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS). Suggestions to strengthen the scrutiny function and therefore the overall governance of the CA, had been raised at the induction session and included:

- Identifying the potential role that scrutiny could play in the strategic context of the CA. ie how Scrutiny could play an active role in the development of big plans and policies and the way the CA prioritised its work.
- How to deliver CA accountability for the region
- How to provide proportionate and constructive challenge to the Mayor and the wider CA on their activities and their performance. All Combined Authorities scrutiny functions were currently looking at the most effective way to do this. The Committee had already identified and put in place Mayoral Question Time sessions and these could be developed further to increase public engagement.
- Identifying the key scrutiny themes in a combined authority context. For example, the West Midlands CA had clearly adopted, as one of their key scrutiny themes, ensuring that their transport decision-making was integrated and took into account wider elements such as housing and health.

7.7

At the end of the discussion, the Chair welcomed the new members to the Committee; Cllr Hassall and Cllr Harvey, and also Cllr Smith who was substituting for another new member, Cllr Robertson.

RESOLVED:

That the following items be added to the work programme:

- The Governance Review and the functioning of the CA. This to be a standing item for meetings over the next six months.
- CA Housing Purpose and Function
- Local Transport and Connectivity Plan. This to be an agenda item for the September meeting. An informal briefing beforehand may be needed to inform and influence the report before it is issued.
- Climate Change and a report on the delivery of the Action Plan. This had been provisionally scheduled for September, but it was agreed that this should move to the November meeting.
- Mayoral Question Time, both public and scrutiny sessions.
- Scrutiny of the Budget and a review of quarterly accounts.

8. Co-Opted Independent Member

8.1 The co-option of an independent member from one of the constituent councils was considered by the Committee. Cllr Dupre commented that it seemed particularly unfair that independent members were not included in the political proportionality calculation but was not convinced about the merits of co-opting someone who could not vote. Rather than it being the Committee's role to address this problem Cllr Dupre would have preferred to see Government tackle the legislation and accord independent members full rights for the purpose of calculating membership of the Committee.

8.2 Cllr Hay agreed with Cllr Dupre and proposed that the Committee did not appoint a co-opted member. The motion was seconded and upon being put to the vote, unanimously carried.

RESOLVED:

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee do **not** appoint a co-opted member for the municipal year 2022-23.

9. One Cam Closure

- 9.1 The officer who had been due to present on this item was unable to attend so Jodie Townsend, Interim Head of Governance, updated the Committee with the following brief statement:
“All the necessary paperwork to close the One CAM Limited company has been completed internally at the CPCA, in terms of the company accounts at closure and statements of compliance. Final closure is now in the hands of the company legal advisors and the formalities are taking place. It is anticipated that the final strike-off from Companies House will occur before the end of July”.
- 9.2 Cllr Sharp commented that the Committee should discuss in public the costs involved in the closure of One Cam and that he would take this up with officers and bring back a report to the Committee in his role as Rapporteur for One Cam

10. Housing Update

- 10.1 Roger Thompson, Director of Housing presented a housing update to the Committee, speaking to the Board paper – Future Combined Authority Housing Purpose and Function.
- 10.2 During his introduction, Mr Thompson highlighted that the paper had been prepared through a collaborative process and workshops had been held with delivery partners, and the officers and leaders of the constituent councils.
- 10.3 Under the Affordable Housing Programme, an additional 1449 affordable units, had been started on site by 31 March 2022. The work associated with the programme however had not come to an end as the CPCA needed to continue to monitor the building out of these units, the monitoring of grant monies and the return of loan monies. The paper posed the question as to what the housing purpose and function aspired to be beyond that, bearing in mind that there was no capital revenue support outside of the CPCA's existing resources.
- 10.4 The suggested recommendations in the paper were; to retain existing housing officer skills and capability to enable a response to future government housing initiatives and opportunities, recognising the CPCA collaborative and convening powers with the constituent councils' housing teams and Homes England, and also, to continue to support community led housing throughout the CPCA area in line with the policy approved by the Housing Committee at its meeting in January 2022.

During the subsequent discussion the following points were noted:

- 10.5 Cllr Van de Weyer commented that whilst it was important that the CPCA was ready to take on opportunities as they arose, any retained skills and capacity should be fully exploited and not underutilised for any length of time. Mr Thompson clarified that retaining capability did not mean retaining a whole directorate but that the capacity would perhaps form part of a different directorate, for example, Place, where there would be integration with transport and the business communities. This integration could also offer possibilities for the CA to provide strategic support for example, to major employers in the area who had pressure around housing for their staff and were considering their own intervention.

- 10.6 In response to questions from Cllr Coles and Cllr Miscandlon on available skills, Mr Thompson acknowledged the pressures in the construction industry and that there were linkages to be enhanced within the area of skills and economic growth, including supporting modern methods of construction, which were key to evolving the Even Better Transformation programme.
- 10.7 Cllr Atkins queried whether the cap on the grant rate that DHLUC had applied and the subsequent restriction on the geographical area in which the CPCA could effectively function, meant that the programme had not operated in the areas where there had been the greatest need for affordable housing. Mr Thompson agreed that they had been severely restricted by the conditions applied by DHLUC between March 2021 and March 2022 and that schemes had operated largely in the north and centre of the area as that was where they had the ability to intervene. Considering that there had only been 6 months from DHLUC approval to getting started on site, the Team had done a remarkable job with these schemes.
- 10.8 The recommendation to support community led housing was challenged by Cllr Dupre who felt that this should not be a principle that the CPCA adopted as Community Land Trusts (CLTs) were primarily an East Cambridgeshire pre-occupation and there had been little enthusiasm for them from the other constituent authorities expressed in Appendix 6 of the report to the Board. Cllr Dupre also felt that CLTs were not always 'community led' and that the East Cambs CLT, having the leader of the Council as trustee and claiming to cover the whole of the district council area, did not look like 'community led' development.
- 10.9 Mr Thompson responded that the issue of CLTs had been debated at the Housing Committee and members, not just those from East Cambs, had been supportive of the principle. East Cambridgeshire had their own dedicated CLT and the CPCA was not directly engaging with them in terms of their delivery processes. An outside supplier called Eastern Community Homes had been appointed to supply expertise to nurture smaller CLTs appearing outside of East Cambs.
- 10.10 Cllr Dupre suggested that the report should refer to the CA welcoming expressions of interest in CLTs, which was rather different to the proposition that the CA, as a body, focus on supporting community led housing.
- 10.11 Cllr Smith's observation was that an insufficiently strong business case had been made to justify the recommendations; he was in agreement with Cllr Dupre with regard to the CLTs and also felt that retaining capacity could be a duplication of effort because all of the constituent councils were housing authorities in their own right.
- 10.12 In conclusion, Members discussed how best to present Scrutiny's views and comments on this issue to the CA Board.

RESOLVED:

That the draft minutes for the Housing Update item be sent to the CA Board for consideration at the next CA Board meeting when the report, Future Combined Authority Housing Purpose and Function, would be discussed.

11. Date of next meeting

11.1 Monday 25th July 2021 at 11am. Venue: Pathfinder House, Huntingdon.

Meeting Closed: 12:32pm.