



**CAMBRIDGESHIRE
& PETERBOROUGH**
COMBINED AUTHORITY

Agenda Item No: 10

Report title: Review of Governance and ways of working at the
Combined Authority – Update on progress

To: Audit & Governance Committee

Meeting Date: 11th March 2022

Public report: Public Report

From: Interim Head of Governance

Recommendations: The Committee is recommended to:

a) Note the progress made in the review since January 2022

Voting arrangements: Note only item, no vote.

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This report provides the Committee with an update on the review of governance and ways of working at the Combined Authority as requested by the Committee at its meeting on the 28 January

2. Background

- 2.1 The Combined Authority is currently undertaking a review of its governance arrangements in order to identify how to deliver more effective decision-making and ways of working.

- 2.2 A report to the Committee on 28 January 2022 provided details of the scope for the review which initially had 3 objectives:

- ☐ Review of formal decision-making and consultative bodies
- ☐ Identification of key barriers to deliver effective decision-making
- ☐ Review and refresh the process of report drafting, preparation and effective engagement within Combined Authority processes

- 2.3 Initial methodology for the review is based around engagement and identification of key concerns/ areas to address which will lead to the identification of a number of key themes.

3. The Review

- 3.1 The review began in December through a number of interview sessions between the Interim Head of Governance and the following:
- ☐ Mayor
 - ☐ Leader and Chief Executive of each Constituent Council
 - ☐ Executive Team
- 3.2 As stated above the purpose of these sessions was to identify the key themes that would need to be addressed by the review in relation to governance and ways of working. These interviews have been completed, additionally the review has:
- ☐ Undertaken a governance mapping exercise to identify a full picture of formal and informal boards, committees, bodies
 - ☐ Engaged the Business Board
 - ☐ Undertaken a comparison/ best practice review with all other Combined Authorities
 - ☐ Held interviews with the Chair of the Business Board and the Chief Executive of the Greater Cambridgeshire Partnership
 - ☐ Engaged Cambridgeshire County Council (Democratic Services Provider)
 - ☐ Engaged the Combined Authority Governance Team
- 3.3 A review of key documentation is currently underway to support the review, this involves examination of elements of the Combined Authority Constitution, Assurance Framework, Annual Governance Statements, and Board and Committee terms of reference.

Review Progress

- 3.4 Since reporting to the Committee on 28 January 2022, feedback from the review relevant to the topic of purpose has been fed into the wider transformational work that is being led by the Chief Executive.
- 3.5 A presentation was provided to the Leaders Strategy Meeting on 23 February 2022 on evidence taken with initial findings relating to the governance framework, these included:
- ☐ **Combined Authority Board** – CA Board needed to have an effective public forum for decision making to take place in an open and transparent manner; it would benefit from sharper focus on development of strategies and appropriate interactions with sub-committees; the frequency of meetings and burden of current business is not sustainable or effective
 - ☐ **Strategic Development** – Combined Authority Board members need better forums for debating strategy, direction, vision and key policy in a trusted and private space
 - ☐ **Economic Growth** – central focus of devolution that needs to be better supported through the governance framework
 - ☐ **Executive Committees** – opportunity to provide clear and enhanced delegations to drive delivery and deal with transactional business; less business then directed to the Combined Authority Board.
 - ☐ **Overview & Scrutiny** – requirement to establish the role of the function at Combined Authority level, perhaps with a strategic role
 - ☐ **Informal governance mechanisms** – these are currently lacking consistency in approach; there is an opportunity to engage wider constituent membership and officers as well as key partners
- 3.6 As a result of those conversations the following key principles were agreed to help shape the next phases of the review:

- ☐ The principle of a more focused, less frequent, CA Board on a bi-monthly basis supported by a Strategy and Growth Forum in order to use the time of leaders more effectively. CA Board to focus more on strategic plans and objectives
- ☐ Wider delegations to be explored to the executive committees
- ☐ Role of lead members to be developed
- ☐ Consistent and clear supporting and consultation arrangements to be developed with constituent council officers, members, and stakeholders
- ☐ Work on the governance review to continue, with detailed proposals to be prepared for Mayor/Leaders.

3.7 These key principles will help inform the development work that will continue through the review

3.8 The review team is currently arranging a second round of conversations with Combined Authority Board members at which they will test initial conclusions and proposals for improvement on a wide range of topics relating to the governance framework, including approach to reporting, templates, the role of scrutiny, as well as developing the principles outlined above.

3.9 A theme that has emerged during the initial evidence gathering of the review is the Audit & Governance Committee role in oversight of the Assurance Framework, and could it be reviewed to identify opportunities to deliver more project oversight and Assurance Framework oversight to drive standards and compliance.

3.10 The review team will look to engage the Chair of Audit & Governance Committee on this matter to determine how to take forward.

Next Steps

3.11 The next steps for the review are as follows:

- ☐ Second round of Mayor and Constituent interviews
- ☐ Wider evidence gathering (review of documentation and Committee Chair engagement)
- ☐ Draft final report for consideration at March/ April Leaders Strategy Meeting
- ☐ Final report for consideration to Combined Authority Board

Significant Implications

3. Financial Implications

3.1 No direct financial implications have been identified at this stage.

4. Legal Implications

4.1 Any changes to the constitution which are necessary will be presented to the Audit and Governance Committee at a future date, prior to being presented to the CA Board.