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Mr John T Hill

Director of Business and Skills

The Cambridge and Peterborough Combined Authority

10<sup>th</sup> June 2019

Dear John

### THE UNIVERSITY OF PETERBOROUGH PROJECT

Following our letter dated 11<sup>th</sup> April and the meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> May, I am writing to clarify our request for additional funding and our position in regard to the CPCA proposed tender process.

The CPCA has invested a significant amount of public funds to develop UCP as the vehicle for the proposed University of Peterborough and we have made significant progress towards this goal. We have established an independent Council to govern UCP from 1<sup>st</sup> August under the leadership of Professor Sir Les Ebdon. We have drafted an application for degree awarding powers that is ready for submission but is currently under review due to the uncertainty around our continued participation in this project. The NDAP application is linked to the deliverables of the UoP project and further investment would be required to put in place those systems that have been specified in the bid. We have validated over 20 new degrees with ARU as a precursor to mapping these over to become UCP degrees when degree awarding powers are acquired. We have the support of the Office for Students (OfS) for our plans and, we believe, the support of the local community. In addition, our current student numbers would positively contribute to achieving the timescales and deadlines to which the CPCA has publicly committed.

We wish to see the progress achieved to date taken forward and built upon for the benefit of the new University rather than writing off the investment that we have jointly made. To enable us to do this, we would need to sustain the minimum viable product that is currently being developed. In practical terms, this means that we would need to continue to;

- satisfy the requirements of our OfS application
- maintain the quality of the student experience which could be impacted by the removal of project staff
- maximise recruitment of students onto the newly validated programmes to enable the achievement of the student numbers that have been cited within the Skills Committee Board papers
- continue to promote UCP and to retain the confidence of our current and prospective students and the wider community
- continue to develop the second and third years of the new programmes
- continue to develop systems in preparation for submission of our bid for degree awarding powers within the next 12 months



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- continue to develop our plans to deliver degree apprenticeships and satisfy the sectors outlined within the Evidenced Based Skills report.

We wish to convey to you the detrimental impact that the removal of the CPCA funding has had on PRC. Our primary concern is to safeguard the interests of our students and ensure that there is no ensuing reputational damage. When we embarked on the UoP project it was necessary for PRC to end the joint venture with ARU to allow UCP to become an independent vehicle for the future university. This change has in itself resulted in significant cost due to the transition of systems and amendments to committee structures and procedures.

We believe that UCP is integral to the formation of an independent university for Peterborough, an original aim of the Devolution Deal. The current OfS rules do not permit another university to have ownership of a separate organisation with degree awarding powers. If your intention is still to realise the city's ambition to create something more than a campus based solution for Peterborough, which has existed for the last twenty years, then we need to maintain our current progress towards the achievement of degree awarding powers. In any collaborative arrangement this could sit alongside the development of high quality technical provision by a renowned university partner with a track record in this area. The partners could cost effectively share amenities within a joint campus, as in the example of the Cornwall model cited by Professor Sir Les Ebdon. If UCP's current student numbers were relocated to the new campus they would also contribute your stated objective of achieving 2,000 learners by 2022.

Whilst we are keen to work with you to sustain our joint ambition to create the University of Peterborough, UCP and PRC also need to remain prudent and to balance the priorities of both our further and higher education learners. The recent challenges and uncertainties surrounding the University project have been a distraction from our immediate priority, which remains the achievement of a 'Good' or better Ofsted rating. The College is also currently engaged in a Structure and Prospects Appraisal with a view to merger. The sudden and unexpected ending of the previous funding contract on 31st March has left us with unfunded staff costs and as things stand these will be reflected in a loss for the College for the current financial year.



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We therefore request that the costs of continuing to employ the former project staff, as shown on the attached schedule, are funded by the CPCA until the completion of the procurement process in November. On that basis, PRC and UCP are prepared to commit to the tender process and use our best endeavours to work with the CPCA and other prospective partners to create a solution that satisfies our mutual interests. This commitment is subject to receipt of the tender criteria. We also wish to make it clear that our contribution to a joint bid would be based on the acquisition and operation of degree awarding powers for UCP as an independent institution and that this element of the bid is fully funded.

Whilst we acknowledge that the CPCA has acted in line with the letter of the funding contract, you will appreciate that we are not prepared to expose UCP or the College to similar risk going forward. If the CPCA is unable to agree to funding the cost of the former project staff in full then UCP does not intend to participate further in the tender process.

We acknowledge that payment of this request would be recommended to be made only in full and final settlement of all outstanding matters between CPCA, UCP and PRC

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Nicholls', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rachel Nicholls

Director