



**CAMBRIDGESHIRE
& PETERBOROUGH**
COMBINED AUTHORITY

Agenda Item No 2.1

Combined Authority Monthly Highlights Report: February 2023

To: Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Board

Meeting Date: 22 March 2023

Public report: Yes

Lead Member: Mayor Dr Nik Johnson

From: Gordon Mitchell, Chief Executive

Key decision: No

Recommendations: The Combined Authority Board is recommended to:

Note the content of this report.

Voting arrangements: No vote required.

1. Purpose

This report provides a general update on the key activities of the Combined Authority and the Mayor since the last Board meeting, which are not covered in other reports to this Meeting. It also provides information on some key developments, risks and opportunities that have emerged.

2. Updates

2.1 National Policy Developments

The previous report focused on several issues of interest that emerged following the Chancellors Autumn statement. Subsequent weeks have seen a mix of better insight of previous announcements and emergence of further issues and proposals that impact the key activities of the Combined Authority.

The recent large changes to government departments and their responsibilities included the breakup of the BEIS, DCMS, and the Department for International Trade. This reshaping of the Whitehall landscape creates four new departments: the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero; a combined Department for Business and Trade; the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, and a “refocused” DCMS.

Of these departmental announcements the establishment of a dedicated innovation department in the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology may offer the opportunity for a greater focus on CPCA economic issues. Our area is home to both established and developing knowledge hubs and industries. In the South, this encompasses long-standing partnerships between academia, R&D facilities and high growth companies represent a strong foundation to further grow the green shoots of knowledge intensive industries are taking root in our north, with particularly exciting developments in Advanced Manufacturing in Peterborough and Fenland.

We are excited by the potential of national government incentives and investment strategies that can level up areas of the Combined Authority area. The north of our region having previously faced significant de-industrialisation would benefit from the potential rework of investment zones that early information indicates may be brought back onto the agenda. However, an emerging concern is that the ‘greater SE’ may not be eligible to apply for such a reworked investment zone.

On 23 February it was announced that Major Infrastructure projects (NSIP’s) will be delivered more quickly under a new action plan. We will want to promote local schemes that we know could unlock significant connectivity bottlenecks. An example of a scheme that may proceed at a quicker pace is the East West Rail (Bedford to Cambridge and Western improvements) project that is currently at the pre-application phase. Changes to the process are currently set to be implemented by September 2023.

The future of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP) remains uncertain. It is not clear what role Government see LEPs playing but it is clear, with no direct replacement to Local Growth Funds and LEP core funding reducing by 50% between 2021-22 and 2023-24 that funding for LEPs will not continue to be provided at the same level as in previous years, if at all.

Recent correspondence from the Cities and Local Growth Unit confirms the LEP Core Funding the Combined Authority will receive in the 2023-2024 financial year will be £250,000; a reduction of £125,000 from 2022-2023 and £250,000 from 2021-2022. Currently we expect this funding to be paused along with the 2022-2023 allocation.

On 17 February, the A47 Wansford to Sutton application was granted development consent by the Secretary of State for Transport. The application involves the dualling of the A47 between the A1 and the dual carriageway section west of Peterborough. The scheme length is approximately 2.5km and creates a new slip road off the A1 south joining the A47 east.

The Department for Business and Trade visited Cambridge in February as part of a North America Roadshow programme that included visiting 12 cities across the UK to promote business opportunities in the US and Canada. Events were designed to highlight the support available for UK businesses looking to sell to consumers across the pond and included a series of presentations and interactive sessions run by trade experts and sector specialists. Hopefully, this will mark the beginning of a new relationship with the DBT for our work.

Early conversations suggest that guidance will be soon set out the prospects for devolving funding further to cut the costs incurred in the assessment of bids. This may present a sea-change in how local government interacts with central government. Moving away from a system that prioritises centralisation of control towards dispersing decisions and delivering more. It is suggested that this will be accompanied by an 'accountability framework' intended to ensure that local scrutiny is robust and accountability to government is built in.

In the build-up to the Spring Statement on March 15, the Combined Authority published our key asks and set out how investment in our strategic priorities can help unlock the full potential of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. We are keen to work with government on the revised vision for Investment Zones and are expecting details on how these will be taken forward in the announcement.

2.2 Funding Activity

Bidding for funds, often with colleagues in local councils continues to be a regular task, with often uncertain outcomes. Perhaps inevitably some announcements will form part of the chancellors Budget statement on 15 March, but there have still been a range of bids or allocations confirmed since the previous Highlights report in January.

- £169k Local Transport Fund 2 – additional 3-month extension to the funding included in the previous report, covering April to June
- £47.85m Levelling Up Fund round 2 bid for Peterborough Station Quarter. This was the number one bid from the CPCA, and there will now be significant requirements to provide detailed business plans over coming
- £89k Local Vehicle Infrastructure Capability grant (LEVI)
- £45k offered by DCMS, to distribute to councils, to enable large scale public screenings of the Coronation and Eurovision.
- c.£4.4m Local Energy Advice Demonstrator grant

2.3 Public Affairs

2.3.1 East of England All Party Parliamentary Group

The East of England All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) report, Levelling Up the East of England: The Region's Progress to Delivering the Twelve DLUHC White Paper Missions, which The Combined Authority fed into continues to gain traction in Westminster. A Westminster Hall debate at the beginning of the year saw unanimous support for transport investment at Ely Junction.

The support was furthered by Levelling Up Minister, Dehenna Davison MP, during her February keynote speech at The East of England APPG and East of England Local Government Association joint parliamentary reception celebrating the report. Deputy Mayor, Cllr Anna Smith represented the Combined Authority as a panel speaker. She spoke passionately regarding projects such as ARU Peterborough and North Cambridgeshire Training Centre and how devolution of skills budgets and Local Growth Funding has allowed the Combined Authority to level up skills provision.

2.3.2 Consultation Responses

The Combined Authority have provided input into the Transport Select Committee's inquiry into Strategic Road Investment, the Government's current five-year plan for investing in major roads and motorways. We have also submitted a response to Engineering UK's Fit for the Future report, which was commissioned by government to outline a blueprint for growing and sustaining engineering and technology apprenticeships for young people.

2.3.3 State of Rail Report

The Combined Authority was represented at a reception in Parliament for Transport East's State of Rail report that was attended by the Rail Minister (Huw Merriman MP) where the importance of Ely area capacity enhancement programme (EACE) and Haughley Junction was reiterated and discussed.

2.3.4 Rail Summit

This summer the Combined Authority will be convening a rail summit, to build the vision for the future of the region's rail services and further make the case for the Ely area capacity enhancements. An early working agenda will also include the available options for Wisbech Rail, maximising the benefit of East West Rail and integrating our bus and rail systems. Internally a working group of Officers from across the Chief Executive's Office and the Place and Connectivity directorate has been established to deliver the rail summit and the stakeholders required to maximise impact are currently being mapped. We are looking forward to working with partners, locally and nationally, to ensure that we collectively showcase our ambitious vision for rail at a national level.

2.4 Economy and Growth

2.4.1 Careers Hub launch

The Careers Hub hosted its inaugural conference at ARU-P on 31st January. The conference was attended by over 100 educators, businesses and intermediaries who had the opportunity to network, attend workshops and hear from industry specialists all with a focus on new talent and careers. The Careers Hub supports mainstream, alternate provision and special educational needs schools with careers education, ensuring each young person is able to take their next best step.

2.4.2 Provider Network Launch

The Provider Network was launched in January, bringing together 40 providers of education and skills who spent the afternoon hearing from the Combined Authority talking about policy, strategic direction, funding opportunities and networking. We are developing and supporting the Provider Network to help to increase the availability and variety of training provision of patch. The Provider Network will support with the supply side of provision, aligned to regional needs.

2.4.3 Multiply Programme Update

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority was awarded £4million by Government to help improve numeracy across the region as part of the national Multiply programme. Colleges and training providers across the region are providing ways people can sharpen up their maths to help everything from better household budgeting through to getting the skills needed to advance in a career.

The Multiply Roadshow toured the region for a week in late February in a fully equipped bus, operated by one of the training providers, Runway Training. Residents were invited to 'hop on board' to find out how Multiply can help them build number confidence and improve their maths skills.

The bus is fully equipped with ten laptops, wi-fi, screens and a coffee machine, and has a relaxed, friendly feel. In addition to visiting major towns, this mobile learning venue aims to bring Multiply to the rural communities across the region.

2.4.4 Community Renewal Fund

In November 2021, the Combined Authority was successful in bidding for £3.4 million from the government's Community Renewal Fund (CRF). The funding was split between two schemes, Start and Grow and Turning Point, which have now completed. Our Start and Grow project, received £2,529,600 and has supported people to start and grow businesses, while Turning Point received £864,251 and has helped unemployed people into work.

292 Start and Grow grants were issued, resulting in the creation of 103 new business startups, the creation of 119 new jobs and 49 new jobs safeguarded. Turning Point supported 101 learners to gain a new qualification while supporting over 2000 people to engage in job-searching.

2.4.5 ARU Peterborough

The building works at the Peterborough Research & Innovation Centre, which is located on the University Campus in Peterborough, is now largely complete and handed over. Negotiations continue with prospective tenants, and plans are being prepared for the fit out of the new building ready for occupation in 2023/24.

Phase 3, known as the Living Lab, is intended to commence construction at the end of this year. Early indications from Morgan Sindall (the appointed main contractor for the Phase 3 Living Lab) suggest significant cost pressures following the receipt of tender package returns from their sub-contractors. The project team are working quickly to establish areas of value engineering so that the potential costs variance is reduced and there is minimum impact to the overall programme. To help accelerate the programme (ensuring LUF requirements are met) early package orders for the timber frame have been placed and works on-site to oversee and complete pre-commencement planning conditions are underway. These works have been done under a licence agreement provided by

Peterborough City Council and are due for completion in late March 2023.

The University Partners (Anglia Ruskin University, Combined Authority, Peterborough City Council) are working together to prepare an outline planning application (OPA) to cover the wider expansion of the University. Subject to funding approval from the special purpose vehicle, it is the intention to develop a programme business case (PBC) to support the OPA. The PBC and OPA will enable further phases to be more deliverable and attract future funding and investment. The project team are working with PCC to ensure that the OPA and PBC reflects the city-wide strategies being developed.

2.5 Place and Connectivity

2.5.1 Transport

Electric Vehicle Charging Points Funding

The Combined Authority has been awarded £88,560 from the Local Electric Vehicle (EV) Infrastructure Fund to continue the expansion of electric vehicle charging across the region. We are currently working with England Economic Heartland, leveraging their EV tool to assist in the allocation of charge points and constituent Councils to produce a detailed breakdown of who we will use this new funding. Additional information, including locations and project timelines will be circulated as soon as possible.

ZEBRA Buses

The ZEBRA project is coming to fruition. The charging facility for 30 buses at Cowley Road depot is completed and the first Zebra double-deckers should arrive/have arrived in March with all of them due by end of April, despite delivery delays caused by the manufacturers, Volvo. Careful consideration is being given to how we promote the arrival of the buses as the formal launch will fall during the pre-election period.

ZEBRA in Cambridgeshire was recently highlighted by the Department for Transport in Parliament as an example of Levelling Up in the area, with the funding to the Combined Authority specifically mentioned.

Bus Strategy Consultation

Over 1000 responses were received for the Combined Authority's consultation on our proposed Bus Strategy (1017 responses were through the online survey and 16 via other channels). An analysis of the responses was discussed by Members of the Transport & Infrastructure Committee earlier this month.

2.5.2 Housing

In late January, the Combined Authority received repayment of a £6.5 million loan made to East Cambs Trading Company (ECTC), which was given to support a community-led development that delivered affordable housing for rent and sale in West End Gardens in Haddenham. The money was received ahead of the redemption date of 31 March 2023 and the scheme has delivered 54 units, 19 of which are affordable homes that have been transferred to Haddenham Community Land Trust.

A community-led housing initiative at More's Meadow in Great Shelford was completed on 30th January, providing affordable rent homes in the local community. The scheme received grant support from the Combined Authority's affordable housing programme.

2.5.3 Climate and Nature

Successful £75,000 Innovate UK funding bid (CANFFUND) as part of a consortium project looking at non-technical barriers to achieving Net Zero. After the initial study is complete later in the year, the area has the potential to bid to Innovate UK for up to £5m further local investment.

2.6 Resources and Performance

2.6.1 Senior Staffing

Senior Appointments

At the end of February, the Combined Authority welcomed three permanent senior members of staff; Nick Bell, Executive Director for Resources and Performance, Richard Kenny, Executive Director for Economy and Growth and Kate McFarlane, Executive Head of Policy and Support. They will join interim Chief Executive Gordon Mitchell and interim Executive Director of Place and Connectivity, Steve Cox, in the Combined Authority's Executive team.

Chief Executive Recruitment

The deadline for applications for the role of Chief Executive was Wednesday 1 March, the aim remains to make an appointment for a summer start date.

2.6.2 Procurement

Following the issues identified in the Best Value Notice letter from DLUHC in January regarding procurement in the Combined Authority a review of procurement is in the process of being commissioned from PWC. It is anticipated that this review will commence later this month and is expected to last around 4 weeks. The outcome of the review, together with recommendations and an action plan to address those recommendations, will be reported to the Audit and Governance Committee once the review is complete.

Significant Implications

3. Financial Implications

3.1 None

4. Legal Implications

4.1 None

5. Public Health Implications

5.1 None

6. Environmental and Climate Change Implications

6.1 Neutral

7. Other Significant Implications

7.1 None