

Review of Governance and ways of working at Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority

2022



CAMBRIDGESHIRE & PETERBOROUGH
COMBINED AUTHORITY

Governance First Limited

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Introduction

The Combined Authority

On 3 March 2017, Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority was established as a Mayoral Combined Authority for the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough area. The Combined Authority works with local councils (constituents), the Business Board (Local Enterprise Partnership), local public services, Government departments and agencies, universities and businesses to grow the local and national economy.

It is made up of a directly elected Mayor and the following seven local authorities (referred to as the Constituent Councils) and the Business Board (Local Enterprise Partnership):

- ☐ Cambridge City Council
- ☐ Cambridgeshire County Council
- ☐ East Cambridgeshire District Council
- ☐ Fenland District Council
- ☐ Huntingdonshire District Council
- ☐ Peterborough City Council
- ☐ South Cambridgeshire District Council

Commissioning the review

The Combined Authority Monitoring Officer, with support from the Executive Team and Combined Authority Board, commissioned a review of governance and ways of working to identify key issues and barriers in delivering effective governance, as well as to produce conclusions on current governance matters and identified barriers alongside suggesting recommendations for improvement.

Following the Mayoral election and at the time the appointment of a new Chief Executive, it was felt now was a good time to review the existing governance arrangements in order to identify how to deliver more effective decision-making and ways of working within the Combined Authority.

The need for such a review has been placed into even greater focus following the identification of significant weaknesses in the Combined Authority governance arrangements by the external auditors in their letter to the Chair of the Audit & Governance Committee of the 1st June 2022. Subsequently the Combined Authority Board requested that officers engage officials from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to discuss support and ways forward to deal with the concerns raised by the external auditors.

The review

Instruction was provided for the review to specifically seek to engage voting Board Members and Constituent Council Chief Executives when seeking to identify real and perceived barriers to effective governance at the Combined Authority. Evidence collected through this engagement has been considered alongside a wide range of other evidence through this review, however it is important to consider it in the context that evidence gathered through interview can often reflect perception and/or opinion.

The Combined Authority is operating in a challenging regional political environment alongside increasing national commitment to devolution, as seen in the Levelling Up White Paper. There is therefore a need to ensure that governance is aligned to the Combined Authority strategic priorities which will enable the organisation to move at pace, whilst making informed and considered decisions.

The conclusions and supporting recommendations in this report are based on the evidence collected and are intended to reflect the common themes and opinions across voting Board membership identified during the review process. The review whilst recognising the learning that can be taken from positive Combined Authority behaviours and interventions has sought to focus on areas where improvement is required and/or requested.

The review process was extremely well received by all who participated. Numerous interviews took place with the Mayor and Council Leaders who provided a wealth of opinion, input, data and examples for the review to consider.

The critical focus of the conclusions is around the need to establish solid foundations and fundamentals within the Combined Authority, this is critical to supporting wider ownership of governance, identification of purpose and approach, and creating more trusted, open decision-making.

Recommendations

The conclusions and recommendations within this report have been developed based on the evidence provided and collected through the review, they are made in the context of the current position that the Combined Authority finds itself in both politically and organisationally.

The conclusions and recommendations are based around identification of key areas for improvement.

As a result, they are intended to be considered as a starting point based on this context under the assumption that the Combined Authority will continually review the key themes identified within the report and seek to establish and build upon strong governance foundations.

The expectation would be that the Combined Authority considers the content of the report and develops an action plan setting out its response.

Foundations and Fundamentals

- 1 Combined Authority Board and Executive Team give consideration to the conclusions and issues raised within the Foundations and Fundamentals section of this report and produce an action plan in response.**
- 2 Board and Chief Executives Group should be engaged by the Executive Team in developing a set of values to underpin how the Combined Authority will operate as it seeks to deliver on its purpose. Those values should reflect additionality, subsidiarity, collective leadership and co-production at their core**
- 3 A clear approach to strategic development should be set out by the Combined Authority that details how its longer term vision, midterm strategy and immediate plans will be developed; making it clear what the process is for developing the strategic objectives and integrating the mayoral objectives**
- 4 The Combined Authority future business planning cycle should consider how the governance structure will fit with its approach to strategic planning in order to focus decision-making on the required thematic areas and how it will support development and delivery of mayoral priorities**
- 5 A co-production approach requires the utilisation of Constituent Authority Chief Executives. The Chief Executive Group should be supported by the Combined Authority in developing its role and input into the governance framework, developing specific workstreams for Chief Executives to lead on alongside interaction with the office of the Mayor**
- 6 The Combined Authority should seek to operate as a partnership at member and officer level with a clear framework of engagement through a bottom-up way of working, developing this framework should be a key task for the 'Even Better' Transformation Project**

Culture and Behaviours

- 7 Combined Authority Board and Executive Team give consideration to the conclusions and issues raised within the Culture and Behaviours section of this report and produce an action plan in response**
- 8 The Governance Framework should reflect a more strategic remit for the Combined Authority Board supported by an engaged Pre-Board process based on the values set out in this report**
- 9 The Executive Team, supported by the Chief Executive Group, develop a workstream to help reset and improve Political dynamics and behaviours**
- 10 The Chief Executive Group, enabled by the Combined Authority Chief Executive, develop lead roles for Constituent Chief Executives to build regional consensus on specific Combined Authority policy agendas**
- 11 The Combined Authority Chief Executive considers options within a future operating model to deliver increased collaboration between the Combined Authority and Constituent Authority Officers, examining additional opportunities for joint postings**
- 12 The Combined Authority should implement a development programme to build relationships between Board Members and the Combined Authority Executive Team**

Governance as an Enabler

- 13 Combined Authority Board and Executive Team give consideration to the conclusions and issues raised within the Governance as an enabler section of this report and produce an action plan in response**
- 14 The Combined Authority should seek to ensure employees understand the governance framework and how decisions are taken. This should become a key component for new starter induction and the Governance Team should develop and deliver an annual programme of lunch and learn information sessions alongside training and guidance for officers and partners.**
- 15 Constituent Authorities provide a list of key officers to the Combined Authority on each thematic area (to be detailed by the Combined Authority) so that those officers can be sent relevant papers for relevant Combined Authority Boards and Committees.**
- 16 The Chief Executive, in engagement with Constituent Council Chief Executives, considers how to develop approaches to better engage and inform Constituent Authorities.**
- 17 The principle of 'steering committees' consisting of appropriate Constituent Council lead officers be set up to support formal Combined Authority**

Committees (other than Board and Regulatory Committees) be adopted by the Combined Authority.

- 18 The Combined Authority adopt decision-making principles for inclusion within the constitution that sets out the principles by which decisions will be made at the Combined Authority. It is recommended that the decision-making principles set out in this report be the basis of those principles.**
- 19 The Chief Executive engages CPSB Membership to discuss how best the Combined Authority can enable and support it in achieving its objectives.**

Governance Framework

- 20 Combined Authority Board and Executive Team give consideration to the conclusions and issues raised within the Governance Framework section of this report and produce an action plan in response**
- 21 The Combined Authority Board reverts to a bi-monthly cycle with an amended terms of reference designed to place a more strategic focus on its business, noting the conclusions and suggestions made within this report**
- 22 A Pre-Board brief meeting and process be developed and established at the earliest opportunity through the *Even Better* transformation project, noting the conclusions and suggestions made within this report**
- 23 Leaders Strategy Meeting be reenvisioned to take on the role set out under Strategic Growth Forum in section 6.75 to 6.80 of this report**
- 24 The Combined Authority develops an Executive Committee recommendation template (as part of a pack) for inclusion in Board papers, to ease the process of considering Executive Committee recommendations and reduce paperwork**
- 25 The Combined Authority Board considers how it wishes to place more of a focus on delivery of its Economic Strategy and the Sustainable Growth Ambition Statement, either through the Board itself or by creating an Economic Growth Executive Committee with responsibility for the delivery of the Economic Growth Strategy**
- 26 Consideration be given to providing delegations from the Board to relevant Executive Committees for the approval of schemes that have already been budgeted for and approved for development and delivery, empowering those Committees to own delivery of key thematic strategy**
- 27 *Even Better* Transformation Project reviews wider approvals that could be delegated down to Executive Committees**
- 28 The Combined Authority give consideration to creating a Member Friendly report template, specific to the needs and identify of the Combined**

Authority, focused on providing the right information to inform effective decision-making

- 29 The Combined Authority Board considers its voting arrangements in regards to the Business Board representative and wider**
- 30 Consideration be given to the future role of the Business Board, taking into account the Levelling Up White Paper, the future governance framework and the content of this report**
- 31 The Combined Authority Overview & Scrutiny Committee is engaged to identify requirements for reporting in a scrutiny context**
- 32 The Overview & Scrutiny Committee place developing the function and its identity in a Combined Authority context at the centre of its 2022/23 work programme, examining the 4 workstreams identified within this review.**
- 33 The Scrutiny Call-in process as detailed in the Constitution be updated to require justification for a call-in request in line with the principles of decision-making**
- 34 The Combined Authority Board give consideration to amending the thematic focus of its Executive Committees taking into account the conclusions set out in 6.87 to 6.123**
- 35 Support for Audit & Governance Committee be enhanced to ensure clear links exist between the role and information provided to PARC and the Committee**
- 36 The role of Audit & Governance Committee be clarified in regards to performance management and what information it requires to undertake this role**
- 37 The role of the Audit & Governance Committee be enhanced as it applies to the Assurance Framework to ensure that it includes oversight of compliance with the Assurance Framework and best practice development.**
- 38 Audit & Governance Committee be provided with training on its financial management role, key associated skills and how this fits into the Combined Authority context**
- 39 The Combined Authority give consideration to the various options for its governance structure as set out in Appendix E**

Governance Process

- 40 Combined Authority Board and Executive Team give consideration to the conclusions and issues raised within the Governance Process section of this report and produce an action plan in response**

- 42 The Combined Authority Executive Team takes responsibility for ensuring appropriate officer responses to Board and Committee actions**
- 43 The Forward Plan process trialled since January 2022 be continued to ensure appropriate Political and Senior Officer ownership and oversight**
- 44 The process for Mayoral Decision Notices and Officer Decision Notices set out in Appendix F be adopted**
- 45 Each Combined Authority Business Area designate an officer to act as Governance Lead, acting as the point of contact with Governance Services and Committee Services on Board and Committee requirements**
- 46 The Combined Authority Executive Team considers how to improve organisational culture in regards to meeting governance requirements and delivering good governance behaviours**
- 47 The Combined Authority adopts its approach to minute taking at Board and Committees in line with the conclusions within this report, moving away from verbatim record of meetings to a more focused summarised approach**

1. The Review

- 1.1 Governance First Limited were commissioned to undertake an independent review of the current governance arrangements and ways of working within the Combined Authority at a member level in order to identify barriers to effective decision-making, provide subsequent conclusions and to make recommendations for improvements.
- 1.2 Governance First are a Governance Consultancy Company with a background in local government accountability and governance who have worked with a number of Combined Authorities across the Country, undertaking governance reviews, developing Assurance Frameworks and advising on governance matters and issues.
- 1.3 The review was undertaken between November 2021 and April 2022. The content of the review reflects evidence gathered during this time period.

Terms of Reference

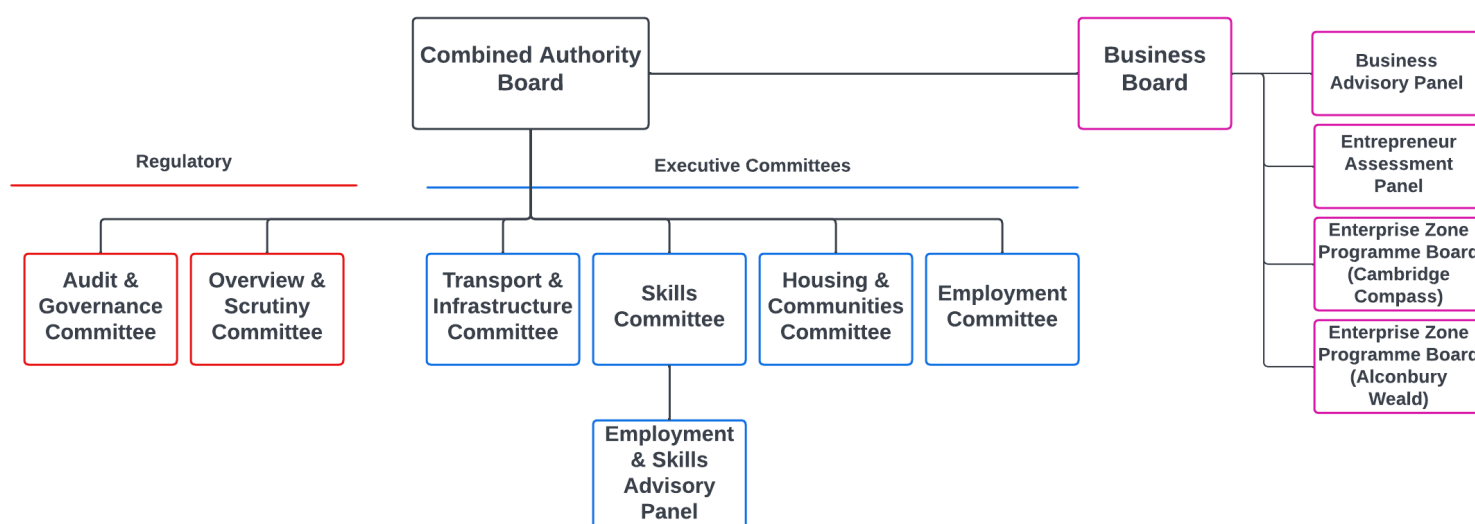
- 1.4 The terms of reference for the review, as agreed and evolved by the Combined Authority Executive Team, were as follows:
 - ☐ Review the formal decision-making and consultative bodies at the Combined Authority
 - ☐ Undertake direct consultation with the Mayor, and Leaders and Chief Executives of Constituent Authorities in order to identify key barriers to delivering effective decision-making
 - ☐ Review and refresh the process of report drafting, preparation and effective engagement within Combined Authority processes
 - ☐ Having specific regard to the views of the Mayor and Constituent Authority Leaders and Chief Executives, make recommendations to the Combined Authority Board that seek to strengthen and improve on the current governance arrangements
- 1.5 Governance of an organisation comprises many elements including politicians, the Board, officers, compliance structures, decision-making, control and risk management frameworks, which interact with the broader organisation to influence performance. A governance review can encompass all the elements of a governance framework and seeks to analyse and interpret current performance against best practice to identify possible improvements. This review was asked to focus on identification of barriers to deliver effective decision-making within the Combined Authority setting, **specifically noting the views of the Mayor and Leaders, plus the Chief Executives of Constituent Authorities.**
- 1.6 The review was not about looking for failings, but more about finding ways to maximise performance of the governance system.
- 1.7 In this report, the term '**governance**' is used often. It refers to the way that the Combined Authority makes decisions and who is involved in making those decisions. The Combined Authority governance arrangements should be appropriate to its business, scale and culture and comply with the required legislation and regulations. The structure should combine efficient decision-making with accountability and transparency.

Methodology

- 1.8 The review was directed to fulfil its terms of reference and centre its evidence gathering around engagement with politicians on the Combined Authority Board and Constituent Chief Executives in order to identify key barriers to effective decision-making. The methodology employed to inform the review was as follows:
- ❑ Multiple interviews with the Mayor
 - ❑ Multiple interviews with Constituent Council Leaders and Chief Executives
 - ❑ Engagement with Combined Authority Executive Team (ET) via multiple ET meetings and 1-2-1 discussions with Executive Team members
 - ❑ Wider Combined Authority Officer engagement including the 'Even Better' Transformation Project Operations Group
 - ❑ Interview with Chair of Business Board and engagement with the Business Board
 - ❑ Governance Mapping
 - ❑ Workshops with Combined Authority Governance Team and Cambridgeshire County Council Democratic Services Team (have SLA with CA to provide Committee Services)
 - ❑ Comparison work with other Mayoral Combined Authorities
 - ❑ Interview with Chief Executive of Greater Cambridgeshire Partnership
 - ❑ Review of key documentation
- 1.9 The key themes for improvement identified throughout the review were subsequently examined and tested with each identified audience above as appropriate.
- 1.10 In addition to interviews a review of existing documentation was undertaken to support the review, this involved examination of elements of the Combined Authority Constitution, Assurance Framework, Board and Committee terms of reference and Strategic Plan/ Mayoral Manifesto.
- 1.11 The review was not been tasked with an examination of the Combined Authority's internal systems of control.

Current Structure (Member Level)

- 1.12 The existing Member Level governance structure at the Combined Authority is as follows :



- 1.13 The Combined Authority Board is the central decision-maker, it is Chaired by the Mayor and consists of representatives from the seven constituent authorities and the Business Board. It has a number of Executive Committees who make recommendations to the Combined Authority Board on thematic areas

as well as the regulatory committees to drive performance, good governance and accountability - these are the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Audit and Governance Committee.

2. Analysis and Conclusions

- 2.1 It became clear very early in the review process that the Mayor, Constituent Leaders and Chief Executives believed the review needed to focus on the foundations and fundamentals of governance, this would then direct analysis around the required governance framework of the Combined Authority. This is reflected in the evidence base and the analysis of that evidence.
- 2.2 Consistent themes relevant to the Combined Authority ability to deliver effective decision-making have been identified and have subsequently formed the structure of this report.
- 2.3 The approach to governance in terms of compliance with regulatory requirements, policies, audit and risk at the Combined Authority on the whole appear to be appropriate, based on the available information and assurances given by relevant officers and others.
- 2.4 The Combined Authority benefits from a dedicated and experienced officer core and its Board membership is clearly passionate about improving the lives of the citizens of the region. Governance in the Combined Authority continues to operate, delivering an exceptionally busy Board schedule with supporting Committees and activity.
- 2.5 Analysis of the evidence has been broken down into the following areas:
 - ☐ Foundations and Fundamentals
 - ☐ Culture and behaviours
 - ☐ Governance as an enabler
 - ☐ The Governance Framework
 - ☐ Governance Processes
- 2.6 Analysis and subsequent conclusions are drawn from the various written and verbal evidence provided.

Foundations and Fundamentals

- 3.1 Support for the Combined Authority project was a consistent theme throughout the evidencing gathering phase of the review. All Politicians and Constituent Chief Executives were keen to promote the **'potential'** of a Combined Authority and the significant value that it could add to the region. Similarly a strong consensus existed amongst Politicians, Constituent Chief Executives and Combined Authority officers that all had to come together to provide **collective leadership** to support the Combined Authority in delivering on the ambition to drive and deliver regional benefits.
- 3.2 What was far less evident from the evidence gathered was a shared understanding of what success looked like for the Combined Authority and what the immediate, medium and longer-term ambitions and objectives were in order to deliver this success. Fundamental to this was the belief that together (Politicians and Senior Officers) the Combined Authority had not established a clear purpose which could be clearly identified and bought in to.

“The Combined Authority has not established a supported and owned purpose with its membership. It lacks the foundations and fundamentals to build upon.”

- 3.3 The interviews in particular revealed consistent themes that interviewees collectively believe are preventing the Combined Authority from reaching its potential. These key themes are all fundamental to the foundations of the Combined Authority, they have been identified as follows:
- ☐ A collective agreed **purpose** of the Combined Authority has not been established
 - ☐ A collective long-term **vision** of the Combined Authority has not been established
 - ☐ It is unclear what the **Strategic Objectives** of the Combined Authority are, it has not established its golden thread
 - ☐ It is unclear where **Mayoral** priorities fit into the objectives of the Combined Authority
- 3.4 It was striking that these themes were identified so consistently throughout the review both at the start and end of evidence collection.

Purpose

- 3.5 Politicians, partners and officers alike expressed a view that the Combined Authority lacked a collectively supported purpose and this was impairing the Combined Authority ability to deliver. In addition the lack of a shared purpose was impacting relationships and clarity around what the Combined Authority was seeking to achieve. There was an overwhelming view that this was impacting how government viewed the region and the regions ability to drive and deliver future devolution.

“While other CAs are blazing a trail and securing significant powers and resources we are lagging behind, and our voice on the national stage is not really present.”

- 3.6 Collective leadership is needed across the region, driven by the Combined Authority, to develop a shared purpose. The Combined Authority has started work on an organisational transformational project entitled **Even Better** which aims to take a system wide look at how the Combined Authority operates and how it can improve with the resources that it has.
- 3.7 The **Even Better** project has established as its key driver the development of a clear shared purpose of what the Combined Authority exists for and how it will work together with its partners. This key driver has already been achieved and resulted in agreement across the Combined Authority Board membership to the following purpose statement:
- *Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority exists to provide the collective leadership needed to improve the lives of our residents. Our mission is to strengthen communities, reduce inequalities and to make Cambridgeshire and Peterborough an even better place where people, businesses and institutions flourish.*
- 3.8 The intent is to galvanise behind this statement and use it to drive improvement by developing a more detailed purpose and future vision, strategic priorities, delivery priorities and a new operating model within the Combined Authority itself.
- 3.9 This approach should be welcomed and represents acceptance and an intent to correct the viewpoint that the Combined Authority lacks a collectively agreed purpose. Accepting feedback provided in the latter part of evidence gathering that the purpose statement is ‘fluffy’ and does not direct behaviours or solid deliverables, it does still represent the beginnings of the collective leadership approach required to move the Combined Authority forward.
- 3.10 Consideration should be given to stating this purpose on key documentation and Board papers to remind Board members of their commitment and drive positive behaviours.
- 3.11 The next step of the **Even Better** project could be to develop a more detailed purpose and future vision, this work needs to identify detail around what the Combined Authority is seeking to achieve and across what geography, noting that a one size fits all approach will not necessarily benefit the entire

Combined Authority area. The develop of a more longer term vision is required to set out what can be achieved through collective leadership and provide an ambition for the Combined Authority which is not currently evident.

Values

- 3.12 The purpose work to date is missing the establishment of a core set of values that set out the approach the Combined Authority will take to delivering its purpose and how it will operate, this is key to moving forward as a collective and building trust and relationships between the Combined Authority and its Constituent members.
- 3.13 Establishment of these values should be the next step in developing the purpose workstream, providing guidance and commitment on how the Combined Authority will operate moving forward. Establishment of a core set of operational values or principles was discussed during interviews and supported in each discussion.
- 3.14 It is for the Combined Authority Board to agree what these values should be, based on the comments raised during evidence gathering for this review it is suggested that those values reflect the following:
- ❑ **Subsidiarity** - the Combined Authority will perform only those tasks which cannot be performed at a more local level by its Constituent Membership
 - ❑ **Additionality** - the Combined Authority focus will be on delivering additionality to the region, focusing on delivering what Constituent Authorities cannot do individually but what can be done collectively, allowing the region to be more ambitious in what it can achieve through the devolution of power and resources from government
 - ❑ **Co-production** - the Combined Authority will work together, through the Mayor and Constituent Authorities, with partners and stakeholders to deliver collective outcomes
 - ❑ **Collective Leadership** - developing a coherent regional approach to delivering on strategic issues and big ticket items
 - ❑ **Devolution** - Collective commitment to devolution for the region to deliver continued devolution from Government to the Combined Authority, not from Constituent Authorities to the Combined Authority
- 3.15 The above values can shape the Combined Authority approach to how it operates and would be a solid stepping stone in building a foundation through collective leadership. **Additionality** is particularly key to this, it was an overwhelmingly consistent theme through the review. The Combined Authority should exist to deliver above and beyond the role and remit of its Constituent Membership, that means delivery of strategy, policy, partnerships and services that the Constituents cannot deliver themselves, and engaging government to devolve powers and resources to the region for the benefit of the region.
- 3.16 It is vital that all elements - the Mayor, Leaders, Chief Executives of the Constituent Councils and the Combined Authority Executive Team - agree and buy into these values in order to create the conditions required to embed these values and allow them to take effect.
- 3.17 Another consistent key theme was the view that the Combined Authority would benefit from taking a **co-production** approach. This would involve greater collaboration between the Mayor, Constituent Authority political leadership and Chief Executives, Combined Authority Executive Team, officers and partners in order to better utilise existing regional expertise, develop a greater sense of collaboration and purpose and drive collective leadership in finding regional solutions to regional issues.

- 3.18 These values could be developed further and utilised as a driving force for the *Even Better* project, shaping the operating model and practices of the Combined Authority and the approach to developing strategic priorities and future vision. They would also help establish principles of operation to support Combined Authority leadership in delivering its purpose.
- 3.19 A positive initial step would be seeking to formalise engagement between the Combined Authority Chief Officers and Constituent Chief Executives through a standing Chief Executives Group. Such a Group would enable debate on key issues and potentially develop options for co-production, such a group would also be able to develop key workstreams for Chief Executives to lead on for regional benefit.

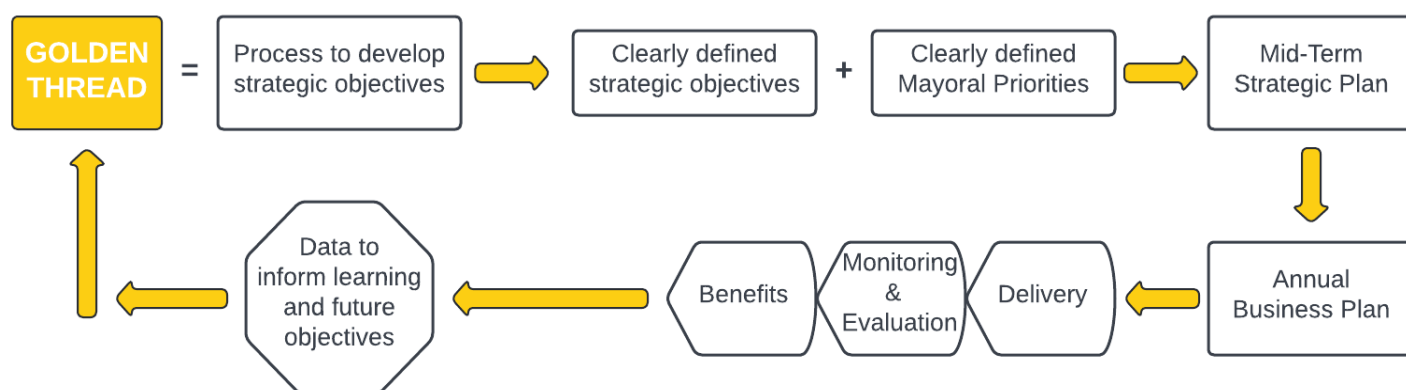
Direction and the Golden Thread

- 3.20 *What are the strategic objectives of the Combined Authority?* There were only two consistent responses to this question from interviewees during this review, they were:
- 1) the doubling of GVA and
 - 2) the strategic objectives lack clarity
- 3.21 The devolution deal sets out the ambition to deliver substantial economic growth (economic output will increase by nearly 100% over the next 25 years. Underpinned by a strong economic and productivity plan GVA will increase from £22bn to over £40bn). This, referred to as doubling of GVA, was accepted as a key purpose and objective of the Combined Authority throughout evidence gathering in both documentation and interviews.
- 3.22 This objective has been developed by the Combined Authority further through the Sustainable Growth Ambition Statement (SGAS), accepted by CA Board on 30 March 2022. This develops the approach to growth through 6 themes which will be reflected through key strategy and policy moving forward. This document represents the closest attempt at defining the strategic objectives of the Combined Authority that I can see relevant to the current Mayoral term.
- 3.23 It is unclear at present how this will now be reflected in any future strategy and devolution deal delivery given the feedback from all voting Board Members to this review. They provided a consistent view that they were not clear on what the immediate, mid and long term objectives of the Combined Authority were and what the process was to develop them. This view was consistently given in interviews, even in interviews that took place after Board endorsement of the SGAS.
- 3.24 It is vital that the Combined Authority establishes what the process is moving forward for the establishment of strategy and policy. This does not mean that there is not an existing approach, rather that the existing approach is not fully understood by Board membership at present.
- 3.25 Engagement with business areas across the Combined Authority reveals that there are clear process for the development of strategy and policy and there is indeed a lot going on in each business area on this front. There does not however appear to be a coordinated or single approach to overall strategy development with business areas working in isolation on such matters. There is a need to drive more integrated strategy development that ensures all thematic areas and associated implications and opportunities are taken into account moving forward.
- 3.26 Any future integrated strategy/ policy development process will need to begin from the SGAS which now must be seen as the 'golden thread' of the Combined Authority.
- 3.27 The Assurance Framework states that the strategic objectives are set out in the Devolution Deal, Sustainable Growth Ambition Statement and evidenced in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Independent Economic Review. The Combined Authority needs a clear Strategic Plan reflecting the

above that sets out its objectives over a 3 to 4 year period with a clear supporting annual plan of what it intends to focus on year by year, if it has one this is not currently understood by Politicians on the Board.

- 3.28 Consideration should also be given to how the Combined Authority identifies regional needs to inform its strategic objectives. The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Independent Economic Review has played a key role in informing the policy agenda but this was done under the previous Mayor, perhaps the next step following agreement of SGAS is for the Combined Authority to undertake or commission further work to identify key regional needs and key regional economic information to both inform its strategic objectives, the development of SGAS and any future devolution debate.
- 3.29 In addition to the operational values discussed above (under values) there is an opportunity to build upon development of the strategic objectives with strategic values. This is similar to approaches around the country that place certain core ambitions at the heart of everything that they are seeking to do, creating in effect 'benefit' values that all actions must seek to deliver.
- 3.30 At Leeds City Council for example they have adopted 'obsessions' to assist them in improving children's services, these are key targets that can be measured and they can be held to account on regarding performance. These measures are carefully selected and are broad to ensure that they can give a good oversight of progress.
- 3.31 The Combined Authority should give consideration to the matters above when seeking to establish its golden thread, which requires the Combined Authority and its partners knowing what its purpose is - how it will identify its objectives - what those objectives are - what the plan is to deliver them. Those objectives should then be at the heart of everything the Combined Authority seeks to develop and deliver.

[Illustration B - Golden Thread Process](#)



- 3.32 The Golden Thread should seek to reflect different regional priorities in a Combined Authority setting. In Cambridgeshire and Peterborough a clear process to establish the golden thread needs to be understood by decision makers and so perhaps should be a key component of the Even Better project.

Mayoral Priorities

- 3.33 The Mayor stated during the review that he did not know what the process was for incorporating Mayoral priorities into the objectives of the Combined Authority, this was also a view provided by some Leaders and key partners. The SGAS refers to the Mayor's 3 C's but now needs to set out measurable outcomes for the 6 themes, this presents the best opportunity for incorporation of mayoral priorities into the Combined Authority strategic direction.
- 3.34 Engagement with other Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs) revealed an approach of incorporating Mayoral priorities, supported by the democratic mandate derived from regional election, into the wider

objectives of the Combined Authority. This appears to have taken place to a degree through the SGAS and would appear to be a wiser approach than separating out mayoral priorities from Combined Authority priorities, such an approach would lead to having to resolve how such priorities would be resourced if they had not been adopted by Board as part of the Combined Authority budget.

- 3.35 A lack of clarity over the approach to developing and incorporating mayoral priorities into wider objectives needs to be resolved, there is clear evidence that officers have and do advise the Mayor on key topics to inform a policy agenda yet understanding and expectations between Mayor and officers do not appear to be aligned.
- 3.36 Promotion of an integrated approach to strategy/ policy development would need to incorporate the mayoral policy agenda.
- 3.37 The Combined Authority may benefit from approaches taken at other Combined Authorities where policy officers review each mayoral manifesto prior to elections to prepare how best to enact the policy agenda dependent upon who is elected. It should be noted that officers felt that a clearly established Mayoral manifesto was not in existence for the incumbent and so they were not able to undertake this task for the Mayor for this current term.

Vision

- 3.38 The rejection of the Business Plan 2022/23 at the Combined Authority Board in March 2022 highlighted the difficult voting arrangements which the Combined Authority must work within as set up in the Combined Authority Order. It also identified the perceived lack of engagement with Constituent Authority's in developing the Business Plan and the need for a clear purpose, values and established direction as mentioned above throughout everything that the Combined Authority does.



[Illustration C – Golden Thread Venn Diagram](#)

- 3.39 This must be taken on board when developing a longer term vision for the region that is capable of sustaining short-term politics and provides a platform for future devolution. West Midlands has a 2030 vision, Greater Manchester has a strategy for 2021-2031, these strategies are based on agreed approaches to identifying regional insights and data that make them more capable of withstanding short term politics.
- 3.40 The ***Even Better*** transformation project has an ambition to develop a regional vision, it should consider doing so utilising agreed values and an agreed approach to identifying key drivers with Board and key stakeholders. It should also seek to first ensure complete clarity exists within the Combined Authority's strategic objective development process. The next step could be to work collaboratively to identify what the region is seeking to achieve and across what geography; and what are the conditions necessary for the Combined Authority to deliver that vision and the challenges that will come with it.
- 3.41 Throughout the review it was clear that if the Combined Authority could get close to a broad consensus on some of these issues it would have a great opportunity to deliver on its agreed purpose. Ensuring consensus on a more narrow agenda may help it operate in a more positive environment, this could

subsequently allow the Combined Authority to then debate and develop a wider agenda that could seek to impact matters such as public service reform, health and Integrated Care Systems for example, where there is no consensus or cohesive approach at present and subsequently no Combined Authority leadership on these matters.

Ongoing Progress

3.42 It is important to reference ongoing progress within the Combined Authority to address some of the matters raised in this section of the report, these include:

- ❑ As stated above a purpose statement has been agreed and endorsed by Board, this represents a key initial first step in seeking to build the required foundations and fundamentals of the Combined Authority that have been identified as requiring improvement.
- ❑ Progress has also been made in establishing a standing Chief Executives Group within the Combined Authority structure and the first meeting has taken place.
- ❑ The *Even Better* project is up and running with clear workstreams including supporting the governance framework and developing informal governance mechanisms.
- ❑ The development and adoption of the Sustainable Growth Ambition Statement represents development of priorities relevant to the current Mayoral term
- ❑ Improvements are being delivered to drive development of policy, the business planning timetable now feeds through each business area which is a significant step

Conclusion Summary

The Combined Authority currently lacks a number of foundations and fundamentals that need to be addressed, the *Even Better* project is welcomed as a positive step towards seeking to provide the Combined Authority with the necessary foundations but it must be driven and delivered in an environment of engagement, consultation and collaboration rather than a top down internal officer exercise.

There is clear evidence that the Combined Authority needs to establish a clear purpose with meaning, setting out deliverables and a clear process for developing strategy and policy that will allow it to realise that purpose. The establishment of a golden thread should be a key objective for the *Even Better* project.

Key to purpose is ensuring mayoral priorities are supported in development and proposed for incorporation into the wider Combined Authority objectives.

The establishment of operating values (or principles) would be a positive attempt to improve consensus, develop collective leadership and build trust and relationships between the Combined Authority and its Constituent members.

A clear purpose and set of values will inform the requirements of the governance framework and help establish clear roles and responsibilities to help facilitate more effective decision-making. This will support development of a more strategically focused Combined Authority Board, addressing the reported disconnect between Mayor and Leaders and strategic development, decisions and direction.

Constituents often referred to the Combined Authority as a separate entity to themselves, whilst noting that the CPCA and each constituent council is a separate authority it is important to recognise and accept that all Leaders and constituent councils are part of the Combined Authority. Acceptance of being part of the problem and solution is vital to providing collective leadership.

A cohesive vision and delivery plan are also critical to informing how the governance framework operates in an integrated and co-ordinated way, ensuring a golden thread exists between objectives and ambitions, and strategy, finance, performance management, accountability and structure.

At present the Combined Authority staffing model is directed towards delivery rather than policy development, as a result external providers are often utilised to develop key strategy and policy which prevents the Combined Authority officers from engaging and developing relationships with key stakeholders in the policy development process.

Accepting that member collaboration is a challenge due to regional political differences, the biggest opportunity for positive change is at an officer level across the Combined Authority and its Constituent Authorities. Combined Authority Staff could seek to work far more closely with Constituent Authorities at director/senior manager/team level to design and deliver policy. This would be a shift in culture at the Combined Authority.

Recommendations

- 1 Combined Authority Board and Executive Team give consideration to the conclusions and issues raised within the Foundations and Fundamentals section of this report and produce an action plan in response.**
- 2 Board and Chief Executives Group should be engaged by the Executive Team in developing a set of values to underpin how the Combined Authority will operate as it seeks to deliver on its purpose. Those values should reflect additionality, subsidiarity, collective leadership and co-production at their core**
- 3 A clear approach to strategic development should be set out by the Combined Authority that details how its longer term vision, midterm strategy and immediate plans will be developed; making it clear what the process is for developing the strategic objectives and integrating the mayoral objectives**
- 4 The Combined Authority future business planning cycle should consider how the governance structure will fit with its approach to strategic planning in order to focus decision-making on the required thematic areas and how it will support development and delivery of mayoral priorities**
- 5 A co-production approach requires the utilisation of Constituent Authority Chief Executives. The Chief Executive Group should be supported by the Combined Authority in developing its role and input into the governance framework, developing specific workstreams for Chief Executives to lead on alongside interaction with the office of the Mayor**
- 6 The Combined Authority should seek to operate as a partnership at member and officer level with a clear framework of engagement through a bottom-up way of working, developing this framework should be a key task for the 'Even Better' Transformation Project.**

Culture and Behaviours

- 4.1 The Combined Authority Board is the decision-maker and face of the Combined Authority, how it operates has a significant influence on how the Combined Authority is viewed and how it operates.
- 4.2 Those who have attended Board Meetings at CPCA will have witnessed debates and discussions that at times stray beyond constructive criticism into confrontational and critical behaviours that do not reflect the required Nolan principles that guide Member conduct.
- 4.3 Equally concerning is the level of procedural challenge made to statutory officers, all of which contributes towards Board meetings that become dominated by local politics, squabbles over process, open disagreement and hostile behaviour alongside a lack strategic focus. This is not to say that there is not reason for challenge over procedural matters but to advise that there is a more positive and clear way of dealing with such matters.
- 4.4 This behaviour was raised with voting Board Members during the course of the review with all accepting that Board behaviour was at present not acceptable and subject to influence from party politics. Additional reasons relating to frustrations were given by Board members for poor behaviour at the Board, such as:
- “There is a lack of respect for what the Combined Authority can and could do which leads to a lack of respect for each other”***
- “Board meetings are terrible experiences, they are too long and not focused”***
- 4.5 Politicians also raised concerns regarding report quality, regular late items amongst a perception that they were not being actively engaged in the preparation process for Board meetings, all of which contributed to a tone of negative debate. There are forums for political involvement in preparation for Board meetings such as Leaders Strategy Meeting where direction can be given regarding required report content to inform decision-making.
- 4.6 Many Combined Authorities have developed a consensus approach to decision-making which often requires key items to be positively discussed and agreed upon without the need for a vote. Such approaches are supported through agreed values and pre/post meeting processes that could be developed further at the Combined Authority.

Board Culture & Behaviour

- 4.7 Whilst not an excuse for poor behaviour there does appear to be cultural issues that are impacting or driving some of these behaviours such as the operation and content of Board meetings themselves. This refers to the process approach and also the mindset of the Combined Authority when it comes to Board meetings.

Board Cycle

- 4.8 The Combined Authority Board has been meeting almost monthly for some time, this means there is a constant cycle of preparation and attendance for these meetings which is a drain on time for already busy Politicians. Additionally the Pre-Board meeting process does not seem to engage Board membership as happens at other Combined Authorities such as in the North of Tyne or West Midlands. These Combined Authorities engage Board membership in upcoming agenda items and seek guidance on report drafting and required content to assist with decision-making.
- 4.9 A monthly Leaders Strategy Meeting (LSM) takes place which is attended by the Mayor and Leaders to attempt to engage them in the process of ensuring agenda awareness and providing guidance on report content, however this meeting is not specifically focused on pre-Board requirements as it also

seeks to cover wider political and policy topics. Leaders reported that LSM does not generally engage membership early enough to impact report drafting and content.

- 4.10 Board Members do not direct ownership of the Forward Plan at present which appears to be driven by Combined Authority Officers. Board Members should be challenging the content as should the Combined Authority Executive Team in order to ensure items going to Board are appropriate and that there is genuine strategic fit and reasoning for those items being added to the Forward Plan. This challenge process can also provide an opportunity for Board membership to set out what information they may need in order to make a decision.
- 4.11 The Forward Plan is a standing item at Board meetings, this tends to be at the end of the agenda and is often considered at haste as a result. It also informally comes to LSM but appears to be considered as an information item to note rather than to own and challenge. Internally the Forward Plan now comes to the Executive Team for review, this is key to ensuring effective officer challenge to items being added.
- 4.12 Then there is the issue of reports themselves, this will be addressed in the governance framework and process section of this report. However, key to reporting issues is the length of reports and also the content. A majority of Board Members stated that they felt they were not given the required information to make an effective decision on items being considered by the Board in regards to background papers and detail on strategic fit. The Bus Service Improvement Plan was highlighted as an example by several Leaders.
- 4.13 A good governance framework will usually help manage and mitigate these challenges through transparent, streamlined, integrated and robust meeting preparation, planning and subsequent decision-making. Currently there are some aspects of the governance framework, covered in the report, which are not working effectively and therefore contributing to the problem. The Pre-Board process is one of these.
- 4.14 The Board currently deals with a considerable amount of business due to the lack of delegated authority it has handed to other Committees within the governance framework. Board Members are often required as a result to discuss non-strategic items on a regular basis. All voting Board Members during interviews stated they supported delegation to appropriate committees in order to support a strategic focus at the Board.
- 4.15 The remit of Board will be addressed further in the governance framework section of this report.

Lack of consensus

- 4.16 I have attended and viewed several Board meetings during the course of this review to see first-hand how they have operated, the key takeaway from these meetings other than the burden of business and individual behaviours is the very visible lack of consensus amongst its membership.
- 4.17 The existing engagement and preparation process for Board meetings and the issues raised under Foundations and Fundamentals are clear contributing factors to this, as of course is party politics. It is not difficult to identify political factions at Board meetings, this alongside open disagreement and challenge are further indicators of the lack of consensus that exists amongst Board membership.
- 4.18 Some Combined Authorities like the North of Tyne refer to a consensus approach within their constitution and the voting arrangements created at Combined Authorities through their Orders set up the need for regional consensus in order to effectively operate. The political balance within Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is more challenging than in North of Tyne or Greater Manchester and this should be noted, however West Midlands Combined Authority has similar political challenges. It deliberately seeks to ensure its Board operates through consensus which it develops and confirms in

the policy development and pre-board process. As a result Board meetings in the West Midlands on the whole have less visible divisions.

- 4.19 Introducing opportunities for engagement and input into reports, early briefings on upcoming items alongside ownership of the Forward Plan, and a clear supported agenda (with items where consensus has not been reached not taken to Board) can help create a culture of consensus. Further interaction between officers and the sharing of responsibility for reaching consensus can strengthen this approach further.
- 4.20 As Chair of the Board the Mayor plays a key role in seeking consensus amongst Board membership. Engagement with other Combined Authorities revealed consistent relationship processes such as 'check ins' between the Mayor and individual Leaders and away days to focus on debating and developing key items. It is important the Mayor is supported in seeking to develop relationships by the Combined Authority Executive Team, similarly that the Mayor takes responsibility for engaging Leaders and that Leaders are receptive to such efforts.

Mindset and Politics

- 4.21 Officers engaged during the review referred to two key frustrations in engaging Politicians across the region, that being mindset and politics. Mindset refers to the challenge of getting Politicians and Constituent Authorities to take a regional 'big picture' perspective of key issues. Parochial viewpoints set around 'what is in this for our district' were reported as a common challenge by officers.
- 4.22 Council Leaders referred to other Board Members not taking a regional and strategic approach to discussions with the most common reason given being that the strategic direction and purpose of the Combined Authority was not clear. As a result this left Leaders unable to identify or take a strategic view in the context of the Combined Authority which may have led them to the safety of taking a parochial view.
- 4.23 On the flip side the Mayor and Leaders reported frustrations with Combined Authority Officers for wanting to take a one size fits all approach to key issues, in their opinion not noting the differences between areas within the region.
- 4.24 Dealing with a constituent based approach and ignoring different constituent needs to regional strategic matters is a challenge all Combined Authorities must face. Successful Combined Authorities utilise an approach of consensus which involves significant engagement at an early stage on key issues to help drive a more focused agenda that all parties are in support of in principle. Those topics where there are significant differences do not make it to Board for decision until an agreed way forward has been established prior to decision-making.
- 4.25 Clarity on purpose, vision, and objectives will undoubtedly help ease frustrations and improve mindsets and a significant step could be delivered through agreement on the operating values and principles of the Combined Authority.
- 4.26 There is also an opportunity through greater engagement with Constituent Chief Executives to work collaboratively in the development of regional strategic matters and attempt to take some of the politics out of current debates. Chief Executives are well placed to see regional benefits and to subsequently brief and advise their Leaders.

Collective Leadership

- 4.27 Voting members of the Combined Authority Board are predominantly leaders (whether that be as Chair of the Board, the Business Board or as Leader of an Authority), they have a role to come together at Combined Authority level to provide collective leadership for the region.
- 4.28 It is the role of the Mayor to drive collective leadership with support from Constituents at the Board, in his position as Chair of the Board. Contrasting views were given on the leadership provided through the Mayor during the review, with a majority stating the Mayor could do more, citing that he had not engaged Constituents in major work such as the economic strategy appropriately. Equally others referred to the lack of a Mayoral team to support him and opinion of wider cultural approaches within the Combined Authority that directed leadership through a top down officer approach.
- 4.29 As Chair of the Combined Authority Board, with significant decision-making requiring specific Mayoral support to progress, the Mayor has a vital role in ensuring the Combined Authority Board works collaboratively in order to arrive at a consensus to enable it to deliver its key functions.
- 4.30 While the elected Mayor will have many formal powers, including proposing a budget and strategies, the post holder will still have to confer, collaborate, negotiate and foster a consensus with other Board Members and stakeholders to effectively discharge the mayoral functions. As such the elected Mayor as chair of the CPCA will need to exercise leadership skills to ensure the CPCA functions effectively.
- 4.31 The need for the Combined Authority to develop a consensus culture is referred to above, in order to support a consensus culture it is important that Leaders of Constituent Authorities recognise the mandate of the Mayor alongside a responsibility to also provide collective leadership. It may be that the Combined Authority needs to develop a narrower agenda in order to focus on key areas of consensus to help it initially move forward.
- 4.32 Board Members also require the appropriate advice, guidance and support from Combined Authority Officers and their own Chief Executives. A consistent theme throughout the review from the perspective of Politicians was that the Combined Authority often took a top down approach by seeking 'to do' rather than 'work with' the Mayor and Constituent Authority Leaders and Chief Executives. This fed the perception of a lack of engagement by the Executive Team and a view that the existing organisational culture was focused to directly deliver and at times 'impose upon' rather than commission or seek to utilise existing regional expertise. This approach is contrary to that of co-production and the values recommended within this report.

Behaviour

- 4.33 From the evidence gathered it was widely recognised that there have been positive improvements in the culture of the organisation amongst officers and politicians but that further improvements were required. Overwhelmingly voting Board Members, Constituent Chief Executives and CA staff who were engaged reported that they wanted to create a working environment which was more open to engagement, collaboration, with a clear focus on clear priorities and welcoming of challenge.
- 4.34 Board Members and Senior Officers within the Combined Authority talked consistently about there being a lack of trust between the Combined Authority and Constituents, between the Mayor and Leaders, amongst Leaders and between the Combined Authority Executive Team and Politicians.
- 4.35 Such a lack of trust will have significant negative impacts and attempts to positively address this moving forward are required. It should be noted that efforts are being made to improve engagement through the Chief Executives Group and to develop a Member Officer Protocol.
- 4.36 Greater co-production at officer level, with a bottom up approach, could help improve trust. At the senior level clarity over objectives, purpose, roles and responsibilities can provide some improvement. There is also a clear case that Politicians may need to be reminded of expected member behaviours and the code

of conduct, referencing of course to the Nolan Principles and the need to demonstrate these. The creation of a Member Officer Protocol can support the Code of Conduct and provide greater clarity around expectations and interactions.

- 4.37 All Board Members are expected to act in accordance with the code of conduct and demonstrate regard for the Nolan Principles, given the senior positions Politicians on the Board are in it is safe to assume that they will all be aware of code of conduct requirements. Nevertheless the Monitoring officer may wish to give consideration to providing training and/or opportunities for Board members to discuss their behaviours and how they can be improved.
- 4.38 The Audit and Governance Committee has a role to advise on Member behaviour and application of the code of conduct which could also be explored.

Ongoing Progress

- 4.39 It is important to reference ongoing progress within the Combined Authority to address some of the matters raised in this section of the report, these include the Executive Team taking responsibility to review and challenge the content of the Forward Plan and the beginning of a process to develop a Member Officer Protocol.

Conclusion summary

The governance framework can play a role in setting the tone for culture and behaviour within an organisation, evidence suggests that improvements and refocus within the governance framework could help remove some of the frustrations that are impacting behaviour.

A more strategically focused Board would refocus Board membership onto key strategic items, supported by a more appropriate cycle of bi-monthly meetings and a thorough Pre-Board process that would enable greater engagement and ownership of the agenda, forward plan and reports which could also provide significant benefits.

The greater levels of engagement and interaction between the Combined Authority, Mayor and Leaders through a Pre-Board process could also have a positive impact in building trust and improving clarity on Board activity.

However there is also a need for Politicians to provide collective leadership to the region and act appropriately, party politics is highly evident at Board meetings and the Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer may need to remind Board Members of the Nolan Principles and code of conduct.

There is an opportunity now local elections have passed to reset the dynamics and behaviours within the Combined Authority that requires collective leadership from all. Constituent Chief Executives could play a valuable role in helping reshape political dynamics.

Recommendations

- 7 Combined Authority Board and Executive Team give consideration to the conclusions and issues raised within the Culture and Behaviours section of this report and produce an action plan in response**
- 8 The Governance Framework should reflect a more strategic remit for the Combined Authority Board supported by an engaged Pre-Board process based on the values set out in this report**

- 9 The Executive Team, supported by the Chief Executive Group, develop a workstream to help reset and improve Political dynamics and behaviours**
- 10 The Chief Executive Group, enabled by the Combined Authority Chief Executive, develop lead roles for Constituent Chief Executives to build regional consensus on specific Combined Authority policy agendas**
- 11 The Combined Authority Chief Executive considers options within a future operating model to deliver increased collaboration between the Combined Authority and Constituent Authority Officers, examining additional opportunities for joint postings**
- 12 The Combined Authority should implement a development programme to build relationships between Board Members and the Combined Authority Executive Team**

Governance as an enabler

- 5.1 The Governance Framework should enable decision-makers to fulfil their roles and responsibilities, it should be seen as an enabler rather than a necessary evil. The tone of feedback that has been provided on the process, the behaviour, the focus and the operation of the Combined Authority at Board level has generally been negative throughout the majority of the review.
- 5.2 Officers and Board Members have both described attending Board as a necessary evil with little perceived value. Executive Committee Chairs have described Committee operation as more collaborative but without a clear sense of purpose or the ability to make an impact. Audit & Governance Committee has been described as not knowing how it fits into the Combined Authority and therefore how it can best add value, and Overview & Scrutiny (like in the majority of Combined Authorities) is trying to define its role.

Understanding

- 5.3 Good governance principles need to be understood, owned, practiced and upheld by all decision-makers and those working to support them. Engagement with Officers across the Combined Authority through the review and wider by the Governance Team has shown that there is a general lack of understanding about how decisions are made and what the roles and responsibilities are of key individuals such as the Mayor.
- 5.4 During the review a number of general governance lunch and learn sessions were delivered by the Combined Authority Governance Team to help Officers better understand key elements of the decision-making process. These sessions highlighted a lack of knowledge of the governance framework, who makes decisions and why, the purpose and function of each Committee and the powers and responsibilities that exist across the framework.
- 5.5 Moving forward the Governance Team will need to develop a programme of officer training sessions that:
 - ☐ Provide an overview to the governance framework and how decisions are made, including the process of building up to decisions through appropriate engagement
 - ☐ Set out the roles and responsibilities of the role of Mayor, Board, Committees, Scrutiny and Audit & Governance

- ❑ Provide training on report writing and presenting to Board and Committees

- 5.6 In addition the Strategy Team should consider delivering sessions on the process for how strategy, policy and new ideas are to be developed and fed into the governance framework.
- 5.7 An improved understanding for officers across the Combined Authority can be passed on to Constituent Officers, partners and stakeholders through engagement and interaction.
- 5.8 The *Even Better* project does not currently have included within its remit the development of organisational good governance behaviours, these could be the next step in upskilling officer skillsets following suggested lunch and learn sessions on the governance framework.

Communication

- 5.9 The review revealed a general acceptance that communication levels have increased between the Combined Authority and its Constituents in the past 18 months, particularly amongst officers, however this communication was perceived by some to at times be poorly timed and/or insufficient.
- 5.10 Criticism of Combined Authority communications was a consistent theme throughout the review on the development and delivery of projects and in consultation exercises. The status of devolution projects and the University Programme in Peterborough were highlighted as examples of poor communication by Constituent Leaders who consistently stated that they did not know the current status of developments.
- 5.11 It is important to consider this feedback in context however, the Combined Authority does provide a RAG rating update report for Board Members on devolution projects. Additionally the Local Transport Plan consultation exercise was highlighted as an example of a missed opportunity for greater communication and collaboration by some Constituent Leaders but also given as a good example of enhanced engagement work by others.
- 5.12 For the benefit of this review, which has not gone into a detail evaluation of communication approaches at the Combined Authority, it is therefore important that focus should be put on governance communications and where this can be improved. We have already referred to the need for a Pre-Board process which could significantly improve engagement, build trust and improve decision-making at Board level. We have also referred to the need for the establishment of a Combined Authority supported Constituent Chief Executive Grouping that again would provide opportunity for information sharing and additional engagement.
- 5.13 The Pre-Board process and the preparation of business for other Committees could benefit from greater communication with key officers in each Constituent Authority. This would create enhanced briefing opportunities for Councillors in each Constituent on key issues and CA business if Constituent Councils provided a list of lead officers on specific issues so the Combined Authority could send relevant papers to those identified lead officers as well as Council Leaders and Chief Executives.
- 5.14 Other Combined Authorities have developed 'offers' of communication based around senior officer engagement with Constituent Councils in order to improve lines of communication, increase engagement and collaboration. The West Midlands Combined Authority has developed 'Constituent Offers' that include holding rotating Executive Team meetings at Constituent Authorities that allow lead CA Officers to brief Constituent Officers on current and future Combined Authority business and opportunities. This also creates opportunities to brief wider elected member representation from Constituents on what the Combined Authority is about and is doing.

Informal Governance Mechanisms

- 5.15 The review of governance began with a governance mapping exercise to identify the current governance framework at the Combined Authority. When this was undertaken it became evident that there were few examples in the current structure of 'steering groups' consisting of relevant leads from Constituent Councils and partners that worked directly in support of formal bodies.
- 5.16 This is not to say that informal governance bodies do not exist as they clearly do, more that improvements can be made in ensuring those that do have a clear role in informing the work of parent bodies such as Combined Authority Committees.
- 5.17 Informal governance mechanisms are vital at ensuring appropriate engagement, communication, issue identification and assisting delivery within each thematic area, even more so in a Combined Authority setting due to the partnership and consensus requirements needed for a Combined Authority to effectively operate.
- 5.18 Other Combined Authorities engaged as part of this review identified informal governance bodies within their governance frameworks and set out the positive value that they added to the governance process. Numerous examples were provided across Combined Authorities where steering committees or groups existed to assist formal Committees by helping to inform the agenda, provide a 2 way engagement and communication process, assist in report drafting and review process, identify issues and debate policy ideas.
- 5.19 The Housing & Land Steering Committee at West Midlands Combined Authority was a particularly good example that incorporated the Lead Directors/ Officers for Housing & Land within each Constituent Authority alongside key developers and partners in its membership, alongside key Combined Authority Officers. They were able to review and debate committee business far in advance of each Housing & Land Board meeting which ensured Councillors (Chaired by the relevant Lead Members for Housing) were briefed, aware of the ask and why it was regionally important, and able to help shape the agenda by raising key issues and opportunities where it was felt a Combined Authority setting could assist.
- 5.20 Earlier in the report I referred to the benefits of creating a Constituent Chief Executive Group, this is another example of positive informal governance but at the top level. Chief Executives can be given cross cutting themes to lead on building consensus on for future development and debate at the Combined Authority.
- 5.21 The principle of 'steering committees' consisting of appropriate Constituent Council lead officers should be adopted by the Combined Authority in support of Combined Authority Committees (other than Board and Regulatory Committees) and to assist in developing a co-production approach and ensuring greater engagement and communication between the Combined Authority and Constituents.
- 5.22 The *Even Better* project has a workstream to develop informal governance mechanisms with a focus on communication and engagement, ensuring this work relates to steering committees and their parent bodies could be essential.

Assurance Framework

- 5.23 A topic that was raised during the review, but did not form a detailed part of this review, was the Combined Authority approach to the administration and approval of investment funds and the Assurance Framework that oversaw this approach.
- 5.24 The Mayor and Leaders have a perception that the process for initiating projects is not clear and lacks political oversight or input, additionally a view was expressed that development standards for projects were missing an opportunity to incorporate CPCA specific standards.
- 5.25 Other Combined Authorities have developed their Assurance Frameworks around a single approach that identifies clear lines of relationship with the governance framework, a specific focus on strategic

justification to enhance the golden thread requirement of the Combined Authority, further supported by Combined Authority specific requirements such as inclusive growth or climate change criteria.

- 5.26 A review of the Assurance Framework in detail could be undertaken at the Combined Authority to ensure that it is fit for purpose and provides consistency of approach, standards, appraisal, assurance and decision-making across all funding pots. A review could also examine how the Assurance Framework allows for additional proportionality within the development of business cases and in the development routes that are undertaken, as well as how it engages constituents and partners.
- 5.27 This review has not undertaken a detailed review of the Combined Authority Assurance Framework, however it is recommended that the next internal review seeks to identify and address any Mayoral and Constituent concerns with the Assurance Framework. It should be noted the existing Assurance Framework is fully compliant with HMTs Green Book and government requirements.

Decision-making principles

- 5.28 This review has also not undertaken a detailed review of the Combined Authority Constitution, there is a separate process in operation that involves Councillors and Officers for this process. However, the review did identify when examining the call-in process at the Combined Authority that its Constitution does not currently detailed any decision-making principles.
- 5.29 Decision-making principles are common place in Local Authority Constitutions and act as guiding principles to apply to decision-making, this subsequently can have a positive influence on the approach taken to the content of reports, decision-making considerations and subsequent accountability arrangements through the guidance provided on how a decision will be considered.
- 5.30 Decision-making principles are relatively standard across Local Government and are also present in Combined Authority Constitutions. In West Yorkshire they are set out as a specific article on decision-making, in Greater Manchester they are set out in the general articles and in West Midlands they are further stated in scrutiny call-in guidance and procedure.
- 5.31 In a Combined Authority context these principles could appear as follows:

All decisions of the Combined Authority, including those made by or on behalf of the Mayor, or by a committee or an officer, should be made in accordance with the following principles:

- ☐ *proportionality (that is the action must be proportionate to the desired outcome),*
- ☐ *due consultation and the taking of professional advice from officers,*
- ☐ *having regard to relevant and material considerations and disregarding irrelevant considerations,*
- ☐ *guarding against any form of predetermination in any decision-making process,*
- ☐ *consideration of any alternative options,*
- ☐ *respect for human rights,*
- ☐ *a presumption in favour of openness and transparency,*
- ☐ *clarity of aims and desired outcomes,*
- ☐ *the giving of reasons for the decision and the proper recording of those reasons.*

- 5.32 Decision-makers would be expected to demonstrate decisions were taken in accordance with these principles alongside other considerations such as accordance with legal requirements, the Combined Authority Constitution, the Combined Authority budget and policy framework and the strategic objectives of the Combined Authority.
- 5.33 The lunch and learn session with officers within the Combined Authority on report writing referred to decision-making principles as a good basis of consideration for report authors to consider.

- 5.34 Decision-making principles tend to play a key role in the Scrutiny Call-in process with those wishing to call-in a decision having to justify how decision-making principles were not applied to that decision. Without such principles to apply to the decision-making process it is possible for decisions to be called in without clear reasoning which can politicise the process rather than acting as a check and balance.

Cambridgeshire Public Service Board

- 5.35 The Cambridgeshire Public Service Board (CPSB) consists of key public service partners, its purpose is to provide an opportunity for the leaders of public sector organisations to come together and make strategic interventions and to provide better outcomes for its residents and place.
- 5.36 The CPSB consists of all Constituent Authority Chief Executives, the Combined Authority, the Police & Crime Commissioners Officer, Police, Fire, Clinical Commissioning Group, and Greater Cambridge Partnership.
- 5.37 The CPSB seeks to work collaboratively as a single team with a focus on system wide strategic issues and horizon scanning for future opportunities to benefit the region. The Combined Authority Chief Executive is part of CPSB and has been working to improve relationships with partners which were frequently described throughout the review as in need of repair. It was reported to the review that these relationships were so negative under previous leadership at the Combined Authority that there was a period of time when the CPSB operated without Combined Authority involvement.
- 5.38 Engagement through this review with Greater Cambridge Partnership as well as all the Constituent Council Chief Executives revealed support for the Combined Authority to take a central enabling role in the future of the CPSB. The Combined Authority Chief Executive role was viewed by a wide number of interviewees as a potential key enabler and interface on system wide strategic matters to interface with the Combined Authority and the role of Mayor, which has wide ranging convening capabilities.
- 5.39 Public Service Reform is a thematic area that currently does have a specific focus within the Combined Authority governance structure, given the need for improvements in foundations, fundamentals and behaviours it may be that the best way to move Public Service Reform forward would be for the Combined Authority to maintain a narrower agenda and support Public Service Reform through the CPSB.
- 5.40 CPSB membership are greatly placed to work collaboratively with enabling support from the CA Chief Executive in this area, to bring in political leadership when required and to build consensus. In such a circumstance the Combined Authority Chief Executive would need to represent the views of the Mayoral agenda.
- 5.41 The CPSB terms of reference are currently out of date so now would be a good time for them to consider their role moving forward and how best the Combined Authority can enable it to achieve its goals, particularly with arrangements such as Shared Prosperity Fund on the horizon where such a panel could potentially play a key role.

Governance Roles

- 5.42 The review revealed potential opportunities for development and clarity on a number of key roles within the governance framework, those being the positions of Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Lead Members.

- 5.43 As mentioned earlier in the report clarity is required on the process for integration and delivery of Mayoral priorities by the Combined Authority, improvements here can help increase understanding on the role of the Mayor and ease some tensions around how Mayoral priorities are delivered.

Deputy Mayor

- 5.44 The position of Deputy Mayor featured consistently in the review as a position that currently does, and in future could develop further, to assist with political tensions at Board level. Deputy Mayors can play an integral role at Combined Authorities noting that they play the lead role on Police And Fire where those Mayoral powers exist.
- 5.45 In other Combined Authorities Deputy Mayors have developed roles to support the Mayor and assist in the operation of Board business, acting as conduit between the Mayor and Leaders, acting as a fixer on key political matters and keeping an eye on horizon scanning regional political matters. However where such roles exist the Deputy Mayor role is occupied by an individual of the same political persuasion as the Mayoral role.
- 5.46 It is worth giving consideration to defining and developing the role of Deputy Mayor and how the role can best support the Mayor and Board.

Portfolio Lead Roles

- 5.47 Lead Member roles are currently in operation at the Combined Authority, the Constitution lists Lead Member responsibilities in Appendix 1 (of the Constitution), however this element is clearly out of date and refers to arrangements under the previous Mayor.
- 5.48 A number of Lead Members felt that they were unclear on what was required from a Lead Member especially as the role had no delegated authority. In addition all Leaders stated that the Combined Authority took up a significant amount of their already increasingly busy schedule which meant leading on portfolio areas for the Combined Authority was a challenge.
- 5.49 It is difficult for the Combined Authority to clarify and/or develop the role of Portfolio Leads at present due to the need to build foundations and fundamentals, and taking into consideration the difficult political environment in operation at the Combined Authority Board. As a result it would be prudent to examine the potential role of Portfolio Leads once key foundations have been developed and agreed.
- 5.50 Many Mayoral Combined Authorities have Portfolio Leads but few attempt to detail the responsibilities of the role like has been done at CPCA.
- 5.51 Portfolio Leads are not like those of Cabinet Portfolio Holders within Local Authorities, they have no delegated authority. In order for the role to lead on delivery of a policy agenda or provide political direction to a portfolio the Combined Authority will need clarity on its objectives, a concern during interviews amongst politicians was that clarity of objectives and political trust to stick to an agreed approach did not currently exist within the Combined Authority and as such was a barrier to providing effective portfolio lead positions.
- 5.52 Greater Manchester Combined Authority gives each Leader a policy brief on which to 'lead', in West Midlands Combined Authority they have Portfolio Leads, in both circumstances it is not entirely clear to what extent leading entails. Engagement suggests that Leads have a responsibility to oversee delivery of strategic objectives and to Chair appropriate thematic committees.
- 5.53 Regardless the appointment of lead positions amongst Board membership is a positive opportunity to engage all in the Combined Authority agenda. Leaders suggested during interviews that being able to have a supporting Councillor for each Lead position may be a step worth consideration due to the busy nature of Council Leader schedules. Investigating such a proposal further would seem a sensible step.

- 5.54 Consideration should also be given by the Mayor to empowering Lead Members by delegating functions reserved for the Mayor to Lead Portfolio Members, this is an existing power within the Combined Authority constitution.

Ongoing Progress

- 5.55 It is important to reference ongoing progress within the Combined Authority to address some of the matters raised in this section of the report, these include:
- ☐ Development of Governance lunch and learn sessions for CPCA Officers
 - ☐ *Even Better* project workstream focus on good governance behaviours
 - ☐ Precedent of informal governance bodies already in existence to support key policy or workstreams
 - ☐ *Even Better* project workstream focus on developing informal governance mechanisms

Conclusion summary

Good governance principles need to be understood, owned, practiced and upheld by all decision-makers and those working to support them. This is significantly harder to do if there is no broad understanding of how the framework operates or how decisions are made. Good governance behaviours come from having a good understanding of governance.

Good governance communications have been one of the key asks from Politicians throughout the review, this feeds into the continuing theme of clarity that is a requirements in all aspects of governance at the Combined Authority. Finding ways to enhance communication with key partners and officers can improve knowledge of the Combined Authority agenda and harness greater cooperation and coproduction opportunities.

This can be further enhanced through engaging the lead Constituent Council officers in support of Combined Authority Committees. The *Even Better* project is examining how to develop informal governance mechanisms across the region, the Combined Authority governance framework can take the lead by adopting the principle of lead officer steering committees to support Committee activity where appropriate.

Internal decision-making can be further supported through the adoption of decision-making principles. This will not only guide decision-making but it can also guide report production by directing authors on how the report/ decision will be considered. It is also a mainstay in the consideration of the scrutiny call-in process.

Recommendations

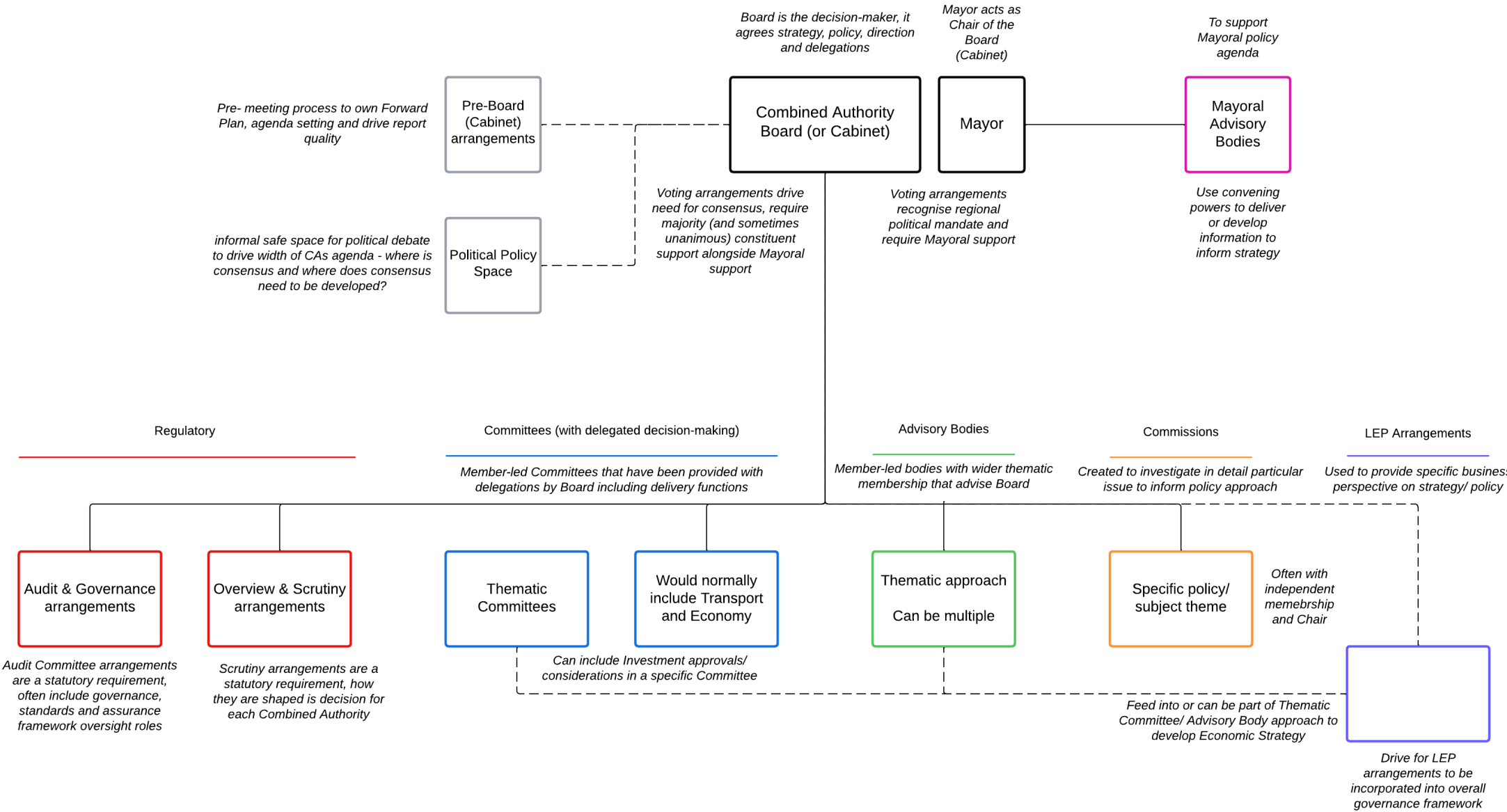
- 13 Combined Authority Board and Executive Team give consideration to the conclusions and issues raised within the Governance as an enabler section of this report and produce an action plan in response**
- 14 The Combined Authority should seek to ensure employees understand the governance framework and how decisions are taken. This should become a key component for new starter induction and the Governance Team should develop and deliver an annual programme of lunch and learn information sessions alongside training and guidance for officers and partners.**
- 15 Constituent Authorities provide a list of key officers to the Combined Authority on each thematic area (to be detailed by the Combined Authority) so that those officers can be sent relevant papers for relevant Combined Authority Boards and Committees.**

- 16 The Chief Executive, in engagement with Constituent Council Chief Executives, considers how to develop approaches to better engage and inform Constituent Authorities.**
- 17 The principle of 'steering committees' consisting of appropriate Constituent Council lead officers be set up to support formal Combined Authority Committees (other than Board and Regulatory Committees) be adopted by the Combined Authority.**
- 18 The Combined Authority adopt decision-making principles for inclusion within the constitution that sets out the principles by which decisions will be made at the Combined Authority. It is recommended that the decision-making principles set out in this report be the basis of those principles.**
- 19 The Chief Executive engages CPSB Membership to discuss how best the Combined Authority can enable and support it in achieving its objectives.**

Governance Framework

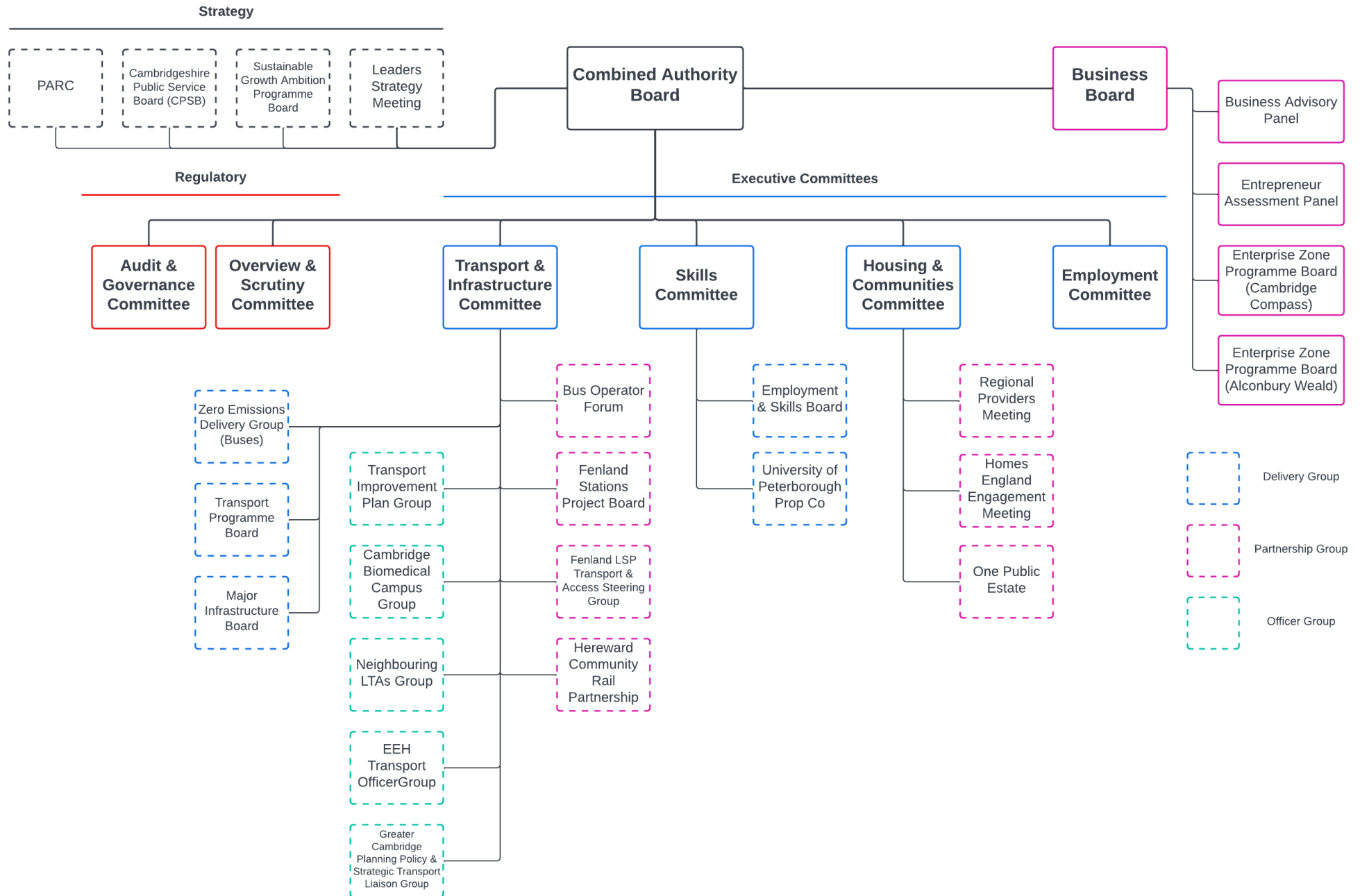
- 6.1 Consistent themes have been a positive within this review of governance, having consensus amongst politicians regardless of party, senior officers both within the Combined Authority and at Constituent Council level and amongst partners, suggests that the issues identified to be addressed are the correct ones.
- 6.2 Another of these consistent themes has been the response when asked what do you want from your governance framework, the response overwhelmingly featuring the following:
 - ☐ Simplicity
 - ☐ Clarity
 - ☐ Alignment with strategic direction
 - ☐ Value adding
- 6.3 Another regular response was that of streamlining. This referred to a perception that the current governance framework was complicated and large, alongside an assumption that it could be streamlined to become more efficient.
- 6.4 The structure at the Combined Authority is relatively straight forward, particularly if you compare it to other Combined Authority structures. Combined Authority governance structures are relatively standard, a review of all Mayoral Combined Authority governance structures suggests that the common components are as follows:

Illustration D – Generic Combined Authority Governance Structure



- 6.5 The Board is where the power sits, consisting of Constituent Leaders and Chaired by the Mayor. At CPCA the Chair of the Business Board is also a voting member of the Board and there are non-voting members such as the Police & Crime Commissioner, Clinical Commissioning Group and Fire Authority.
- 6.6 We have touched on the need for enhanced Pre-Board arrangements and this will be detailed later in this report. At present there is a Leaders Strategy Meeting (LSM) attended by the Mayor and Constituent Leaders alongside senior Combined Authority Officers that plays a limited role in Board preparation. LSM is intended to act as a forum for the Mayor and Leaders to come together and discuss upcoming matters and decisions.
- 6.7 Regulatory Bodies are a reference to the Overview and Scrutiny function and the Audit and Standards function which sits within Overview & Scrutiny Committee and the Audit & Governance Committee. These are functions that the Combined Authority is required to have by law.
- 6.8 Commissions have previously been in operation at the Combined Authority. Commissions tend to be groups set up comprising of membership of outside experts and independent membership who are asked to investigate a particular topic, concern or question and provide conclusions and recommendations to help shape a policy approach. Most recently there has been an independent commission on climate change at the Combined Authority and an independent economic review.
- 6.9 Committees are bodies set up around a thematic area, objective or directorate by the Board to discuss specific matters, they can also play an operational delivery role or oversee delivery of a key strategy. Committees can have a key role in engaging appropriate partners and stakeholders and building up an evidence base to assist in the developing of key strategy relevant to their thematic area.
- 6.10 Advisory Committees are similar to Committees above but are limited to providing advice rather than making decisions.
- 6.11 At CPCA they are ahead of the curve in regards to their structure with the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). The LEP, named the Business Board, has been incorporated into the Combined Authority governance structure and operates as an advisory board to the Combined Authority.
- 6.12 Of course not all of the elements within a generic Combined Authority structure are and need to be in play at all times.
- 6.13 Mayoral Advisory Bodies are groups that have been set up specifically to advise the Mayor in the development and delivery of Mayoral priorities. These groups can play an engagement role with key partners and help oversee the development and delivery of Mayoral priorities. These are common place in many Combined Authorities on a range of topics from Youth Advisory Groups, Homelessness, Race Equality, small business and green energy.
- 6.14 The current CPCA structure is relatively simple and straightforward, it consists of key components without the complication of Thematic Advisory Bodies or Commissions. It also does not currently have any Mayoral Advisory Groups.
- 6.15 Its Executive Committees make recommendations to the Board for consideration on thematic strategy and have delegated authority to oversee the development and management of key thematic strategy and policy. They do also have key delegations, for example the Housing & Communities Committee had delegated authority for the staged release of the budget for housing projects to be funded from the Affordable Housing Programme.
- 6.16 The governance mapping exercise identified the following governance map at the Combined Authority at the end of 2021/22 (please see over page):

Illustration E – Current Combined Authority Governance Structure



The Mayor

- 6.17 We have referenced the need for clarity on the role and responsibilities of the Mayor earlier in the report. The Constitution does currently provide details on the role of the Mayor as does the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Order 2017 ([CPCA2017Order](#)).
- 6.18 The key issue where clarity is required is *what is the role of the Combined Authority in delivering the Mayors priorities*. The Mayor has a regional democratic mandate to deliver their priorities, we referred to the process around this requiring clarity and establishment in the Foundations and Fundamentals section of the report. This clarity is an absolute requirement in providing a clear understanding of the role of the Mayor moving forward.
- 6.19 The Mayor is supported by Combined Authority Officers in the role, however frustrations were evident from the Mayor in the level of support he felt he was given to develop his policy agenda. It should also be noted that the Mayor has not had full mayoral office support for some time.

Mayoral Advisory Groups

- 6.20 A key line of support that the Combined Authority can provide the Mayor with is policy advice and guidance, this could include establishing advisory groups to support the development of the Mayoral policy agenda.
- 6.21 The operation of Mayoral Advisory Groups are common place across Combined Authorities in assisting with the development and delivery of Mayoral Priorities. The Mayor of Greater Manchester Combined Authority has established a Business Advisory Panel consisting of regional business leaders, the Panel has asked the panel to not only draw on their own personal experience in the private sector, but also look beyond it to consider what actions and policies can make Greater Manchester as a whole the best place to do business.
- 6.22 In the West Midlands Combined Authority there have been several Mayoral Advisory Groups on areas such as regional business need and homelessness. The Homelessness Taskforce established by the Mayor was established with membership from all constituents, key partners and stakeholders with an aim of working together to identify ways to tackle homelessness. This evolved to become an ongoing part of the governance structure.
- 6.23 In Liverpool City Region there is a Mayoral Young Persons Advisory Group which serves as a crucial sounding board for the Metro Mayor. The Mayor of London has many advisory groups such as the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Advisory Group which acts as the main body which brings together expert representatives from equalities groups and civil society in the shaping and delivery of the Mayor of London's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.
- 6.24 There is differing approaches to how these groups are supported by Combined Authorities or under the London model, some are pulled together with private sector involvement who then cover costs of administration of operation. What is clear is that such groups provide an opportunity to engage thematic experts and partners in developing approaches to delivering Mayoral priorities.
- 6.25 The Mayor should be supported through the overall governance options, which should assist the delivery of their priorities. The Combined Authority therefore needs to be clear on resources available to support the delivery of Mayoral governance and how Mayoral priorities fit into the overall strategic planning process.

Mayoral/ Combined Authority Engagement

- 6.26 At present within the Combined Authority there is a monthly pre-publication meeting which the Mayor is invited to attend, the purpose of this meeting is to provide the Mayor with an overview of what is on the agenda for Board. In the course of this review both Officers and the Mayor have stated that this meeting is beneficial.
- 6.27 This is further supported by LSM and an LSM pre-brief. Fortnightly Director/Mayor check-ins also existed until recently but have been temporarily suspended whilst an internal investigation into matters not shared with this review are undertaken.
- 6.28 Enquiries made with other Combined Authorities reveals a general practice of a weekly business meeting between the Mayor, Chief Executive and senior officers. At North of Tyne this is referred to as the Directors meeting where they review current and future business, similar arrangements exists at other Combined Authorities with West Midlands Combined Authority operating a Monday start of the week meeting. This consists of the Chief Executive and Statutory Officers (Monitoring Officer and Section 73 Officer) meeting with the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Mayoral staff to discuss the week ahead, set pieces and hot topics. This is supported by a Chief Executive 1-2-1 with the Mayor on a weekly basis later in the week that focuses on delivery of Mayoral priorities and longer term business planning matters.
- 6.29 The review understands that Mayoral – Chief Executive check-ins were undertaken at the Combined Authority until recently but have been temporarily suspended whilst an internal investigation into matters not shared with this review are undertaken.
- 6.30 A regular strategic and business planning meeting between the Mayor and Chief Executive would be beneficial, particularly at a time when the Mayor does have a full complement of staff to support them.
- 6.31 Consideration could also be given by the Mayor on how to better utilise expertise within the Combined Authority with the delivery and lead on Mayoral functions, noting that the Mayor has the ability within the constitution to delegate functions reserved for the Mayor to officers of the Combined Authority.

The Board

- 6.32 The Board is the key decision-maker within the governance framework of the Combined Authority, its purpose is to ensure that the decisions and actions of the Combined Authority deliver key outcomes for the people of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. It is responsible for the adoption, amendment and withdrawal of key plans and strategies and documents.
- 6.33 Frustrations with the operation of the Board were a key theme throughout the review, key frustrations have already been set out in this report in regards to its level of strategic focus, issues with engagement and preparation, burden of business, and its culture and behaviours.
- 6.34 Evidence taken from Board members, senior officers, officers supporting governance and those reporting to Board identified a number of key areas for the Board to improve in, in relation to the governance framework these were:
- ☐ Its focus and terms of reference
 - ☐ Clarity on its role
 - ☐ Providing delegations to supporting committees
 - ☐ Voting arrangements
 - ☐ Reporting

Creating a Strategic Focus

- 6.35 The need for change within the remit of the Board was a theme that officers, members and partners were in complete agreement with when discussed as part of the review. The possibility of creating a more strategic Board was further debated and developed through an engagement session with Leaders Strategy Meeting in February 2022.
- 6.36 The key agreements from that session were as follows:
- ☐ The Board needs to be an effective public forum for decision making to take place in an open and transparent manner
 - ☐ The Board would benefit from a sharper focus on development of strategies and appropriate interactions with/ make better use of supporting committees
 - ☐ Board should be given opportunity to consider big ticket strategic regional issues and opportunities
 - ☐ The current Board frequency of meetings and burden of current business is not sustainable or effective
- 6.37 At February's meeting of Leaders Strategy Meeting it was agreed that a more strategically focused Board should be created and that a potential scope of the terms of reference be tested during further 1-2-1 interviews with the Mayor, Leaders and Chief Executives as part of the review process.
- 6.38 The scope of the terms of reference tested was:
- ☐ To agree strategic objectives for the Combined Authority
 - ☐ To agree key strategy and policy for the Combined Authority
 - ☐ To set long term vision of the Combined Authority
 - ☐ To agree significant approvals
 - ☐ Approve the Combined Authority Budget and the Mayoral Budget (and related strategy, policy, programmes, borrowing and virements over £500k)
 - ☐ Transport Levy/ LTCP/ Consultation on the allocation of Local Highways Maintenance Capital Grant
 - ☐ Key themes/ big ticket items
 - ☐ Key Governance decisions (Constitution/ establishment of Committees and delegations/ memberships/ lead member responsibilities and appointments/ IRP report/ appointment of statutory officers/ establishment of trading companies/ delegations to third parties/ approve, amend or withdraw standing orders)
 - ☐ General power of competence
 - ☐ Agree delegations to supporting committees
- 6.39 There was universal support for this terms of reference which would see a change in approach to the relationship between Executive Committees and the Board, this would involve clear lines of responsibility in regards to strategy where Executive Committees utilise subject matter focus to develop strategy proposals for Board to consider and approve. Once approved the delivery of the strategy would return to the Executive Committee to be overseen.
- 6.40 A key role for the Board in consideration of strategy would be ensuring that an integrated regional approach had been developed that took into account wider considerations than just the thematic topic, for example ensuring Housing strategy had considered transport, health and infrastructure considerations.
- 6.41 Executive Committees could be given delegation to allow them to make approvals, develop policy and take decisions to deliver relevant thematic strategy. The ***Even Better*** transformation project could examine approval levels and decisions that could be delegated down to Executive Committee level which would help create a more strategic focus at the Board.

- 6.42 Another key theme that emerged from interviews was a perspective that the Combined Authority was not placing enough emphasis on how to deal with significant regional big ticket items such as economic growth, connectivity, broadband, climate agenda, inclusive growth and water management. Some of these 'big ticket' items as they were referred to are picked up below in creating a sustainable economy focus for the Board.
- 6.43 At the February meeting of Leaders Strategy Meeting the potential of developing the current Leaders Strategy Meeting into a strategic policy space (at the time of engagement names as the strategic growth forum) with wider membership was discussed and supported, the intention being that this would allow Board members, partners and officers to raise, discuss and debate the big ticket items and start the process of developing an approach which would eventually feed up through the governance framework to the Board. Such a body could work closely with the CPSB and the proposed Chief Executives Group.
- 6.44 A strategic policy space body would engage Board membership very early on in big strategic topics and help create the strategic focus and supporting mindset that the Board requires. It would allow a safe space for key debates and political discussions out of the public eye to determine where consensus lies and needs to be developed, and what the width of the policy agenda can be.
- 6.45 Having such a forum as well as a Pre-Board Brief process also creates opportunities to provide Board membership with information items and remove them from the Board agenda.
- 6.46 Having a strategic perspective on financial management will also be a key role for the Board, managing underspend and budget processes need to be thought through at a strategic and tactical level so they are fit for purpose.

Creating a Sustainable Economy Focus

- 6.47 Another consistent theme throughout the review was an agreement that the governance framework needed to place more focus on the economy to drive delivery of the devolution objective of doubling GVA. The recent adoption of the Sustainable Growth Ambition Statement (SGAS) creates an opportunity for an economic focus within Board business as does a new Economic Growth Strategy which will be considered by the Board in June 2022.
- 6.48 The oversight of delivery of the strategy could be a key role for the Board if it wishes to develop a key economic focus, potentially utilising the Business Board as its key advisory body. The Board may also wish to give consideration to approaches developed elsewhere to place more of a focus on the Economic Strategy.
- 6.49 At West Midlands Combined Authority they recently created an Economic Growth Board with delegated powers aimed at placing regional economic development at the heart of decision-making by making it responsible for the delivery, performance and evaluation of its economic strategy and the management of related processes, as well as ensuring an integrated approach is taken across Combined Authority portfolios. This Economic Growth Board contains the Mayor, Constituent Leaders, LEP representatives, and relevant business, union, innovation and education sector representatives.
- 6.50 CPCA should give consideration to how it wishes to place more of a focus on delivery of its Economic Strategy and the SGAS either through the Board itself or by creating an Economic Growth Executive Committee with responsibility for the delivery of the Economic Growth Strategy, potentially supported by approval and policy delegations.
- 6.51 Such a Committee could also allow the Combined Authority to develop its Business Board arrangements in response to the LEP review by incorporating Business Board membership into a new Committee or utilising it as a key advisory group.

Dealing with Executive Committee Business

6.52 Executive Committees currently send recommendations rather than decisions up to the Combined Authority Board for approval, this creates a significant amount of reports and items for Board consideration. Given that these items have already been considered and agreed upon by the relevant thematic committee it is proposed that they be reported to Board more efficiently.

6.53 An Executive Committee recommendation pack could be drafted that sets out a key overview of each recommendation/ decision with a link to the report considered by the Executive Committee rather than a full report or each item repeating the information that went to the Executive Committee. Each item could be set out specifically for Board benefit explaining what the ask is and why, how it links to strategic priorities of the Combined Authority and any additional information since Executive Committee consideration, with key detail accessible via the link to the relevant Executive Committee paper.

<i>Insert Executive Committee Title</i>	
Agenda Item:	<i>Insert title of item</i>
Recommendation(s):	<i>Insert recommendations made by executive committee to Board</i>
Purpose:	<i>Insert description of purpose of item and what it seeks to achieve</i>
Strategic Objections:	<i>Insert details of which strategic objectives it links to and how it will contribute towards achieving that objective</i>
Links:	<i>Insert links to reports considered by Executive Committee and minutes of discussion</i>

6.54 These items could be presented as a pack for each Executive Committee and would be presented to Board as tabled by the relevant Portfolio Lead. Additionally a minutes pack at the end of Board agendas to note, containing the minutes of Executive Committee meetings, would allow opportunity for questions and oversight of business. This approach would remove the need for lengthy introductions on each item by Officers at Board meetings and allow a focus on Board member debate.

6.55 Additionally the Pre-Board Brief process would ensure Board members understood each item and what was being asked as well as identifying items for focus and debate at the Board meeting to assist in preparation and to help ensure Board members were well informed to improve the standard of debate.

Voting

6.56 The voting arrangements for the Combined Authority Board are set out in the Order, they are intended to drive the need for consensus at Board level. Voting arrangements are intended to drive the need for consensus by requiring agreement between Mayor and majority of Board membership, in practice it appears that voting is very much split along party lines on a majority of cases and can present a view that the Board does not have consensus.

6.57 There is however no requirement within the Order for the Business Board Chair to be a voting member of the Board.

6.58 Concerns were expressed by a majority of those interviewed that the ability for the Business Board Chair to vote at Board led to a democratic deficit and lack of consistency within the Boards voting arrangements. The Business Board Chair potentially carries significant power by having a vote given the political balance within the region, concerns were expressed that this should not be the case

given that they have not been democratically elected like other Board membership. Co-opted members such as the Police and Crime Commissioner did have a democratic mandate but were not voting members of the Board which some considered as inconsistent.

- 6.59 Concerns were also expressed that the ability for the Business Board Chair to vote could lead to a lack of independence in the role from the political process. The recent Government LEP review concluded that the preferred model of governance required Business Boards to have an advisory and consultative role, and a degree of independence from the political process which is potentially removed through the ability to cast a vote.
- 6.60 Consideration of whether such voting arrangements remain and the implications of their removal are required by the Board. Consideration could also be given to widening voting arrangements to include wider membership and new non-political membership. The West Midlands Combined Authority has voting arrangements for constituent matters and non-constituent matters, with Mayor and Constituent Authorities voting on constituent matters and wider membership being able to vote on other matters.
- 6.61 Combined Authority Board and Executive Team may wish to consider this as an area for future review when responding to this report
- 6.62 A selection of proposed options for a governance structure including the strategic focused Board is attached at Appendix E to assist with considerations.

Reporting

- 6.63 The Mayor and Leaders reported concerns regarding the reports that were presented to Board and their impact on the Boards ability to make informed and effective decisions. Consistent concerns regarding reports were provided to the review that included:
- ☐ Necessity of reports at Board is an issue. Not all items require a decision and some decisions have not been fully developed
 - ☐ Sometimes it is difficult to link reports coming to Board with the agreed objectives of the Combined Authority
 - ☐ Reports are not always 'member friendly' in that they are long, can be unfocused and lack clarity on the ask
 - ☐ Important to provide details on options considered, engagement and timelines such as previous decisions taken
 - ☐ Report quality can at times be a concern
 - ☐ Leaders do not have sufficient time to read large reports, it is incumbent on the Combined Authority that it provides decision-makers with clear and succinct reports in order to get the best out of those considering them
- 6.64 Constituent Chief Executives provided a consistent assessment of Combined Authority reports describing them as far too long, unfocused and at times poorly constructed. Combined Authority Officers have also reported difficulties with understanding Board requirements when writing reports. The Combined Authority Governance Team has held 'lunch and learn' sessions to provide greater clarity on writing reports using the existing report template to assist with these difficulties.
- 6.65 The current report template is based on the County Council template and is relatively straight forward, it also contains embedded advice and guidance for officers to use. Committee Officers from Cambridgeshire County Council and officers within the Combined Authority Governance Team regularly engage officers to help them in the report drafting process.
- 6.66 The proposals set out in this report around improving the Pre-Board process should assist officers in better understanding what the 'ask' is from the Board. Feedback on reports going to the Executive

Committees was generally in line with that provided regarding Board reports, feedback also highlighted some concerns regarding Scrutiny reports. Overview & Scrutiny has a different function than decision-making bodies and so reports should be written taking this into account, ensuring that they provide focused detail on key lines of enquiry identified by the Committee to help inform any scrutiny activity appropriately.

- 6.67 It is clear that the Board and Committees would benefit from enhancements within reporting in order to enable them to focus on the decisions that they are required to take, such enhancements could also consider the implications being provided on each report to ensure a clear connection to the strategic objectives of the Combined Authority. This approach has been developed at other Combined Authorities where inclusive growth or climate change considerations and implications have become requirements on all reports to ensure decision-makers consider direct links to specific objectives.
- 6.68 The Combined Authority should therefore give consideration to creating a 'Member Friendly' report template, specific to the needs and identify of the Combined Authority, focused on providing the right information to inform effective decision-making. Additionally consideration could be given to engaging the Overview & Scrutiny Committee in more detail to discuss specific scrutiny requirements in reporting.
- 6.69 It is important to understand that this refers to the report to be considered by the Board, it is not a reference to business cases or other documents that are required to be developed in line with Assurance Framework requirements and HMTs Green Book (and other government guidance). Such detailed documents would be appendices to a Board report to ensure all detail is provided in the context of making an informed decision, creating a 'Member Friendly' Board report will allow focus to be provided on the ask, the strategic fit and the key considerations that need to be undertaken by the Board in coming to their decision.
- 6.70 A draft report template is attached at Appendix B based on evidence collected during the review that can act as a starting point, considering that this is not a replacement for business case documents which would be an appendix to the Board report.

Supporting Governance

- 6.71 The review has already identified the potential benefits of Combined Authority Officers working closely with Constituent Council Officers, this is particularly relevant to the pre-meeting, report preparation and agenda setting processes. We referred to the potential benefits of adopting a core constituent and partner officer steering committee approach working closely with Combined Authority officers to support Thematic Executive Committees earlier in the report. Such an approach could create a two-way process of information sharing, engagement and issue identification as well as open up opportunities around co-production and delivery.
- 6.72 Such steering committees could provide an opportunity for CPCA officers to work more closely with Officers from Constituent Authorities to improve communication, contribute to agenda setting and have a role in report drafting. They could also provide an opportunity to share evidence from across the region and get local input on an officers 'patch'.
- 6.73 The suggestion above needs to be a two way process, with constituent officers also reporting back to the Combined Authority as well as working with their own Members who are attending CPCA meeting to ensure they are briefed.
- 6.74 There is also a key responsibility for Members from Constituent Councils to brief wider political membership within their own councils on Combined Authority activity, this is a responsibility as well for constituent Chief Executives and lead officers engaged with the Combined Authority.

Consideration should be given by each Constituent Authority to the mechanisms they have in place or may need to develop to support such activity.

Policy Space

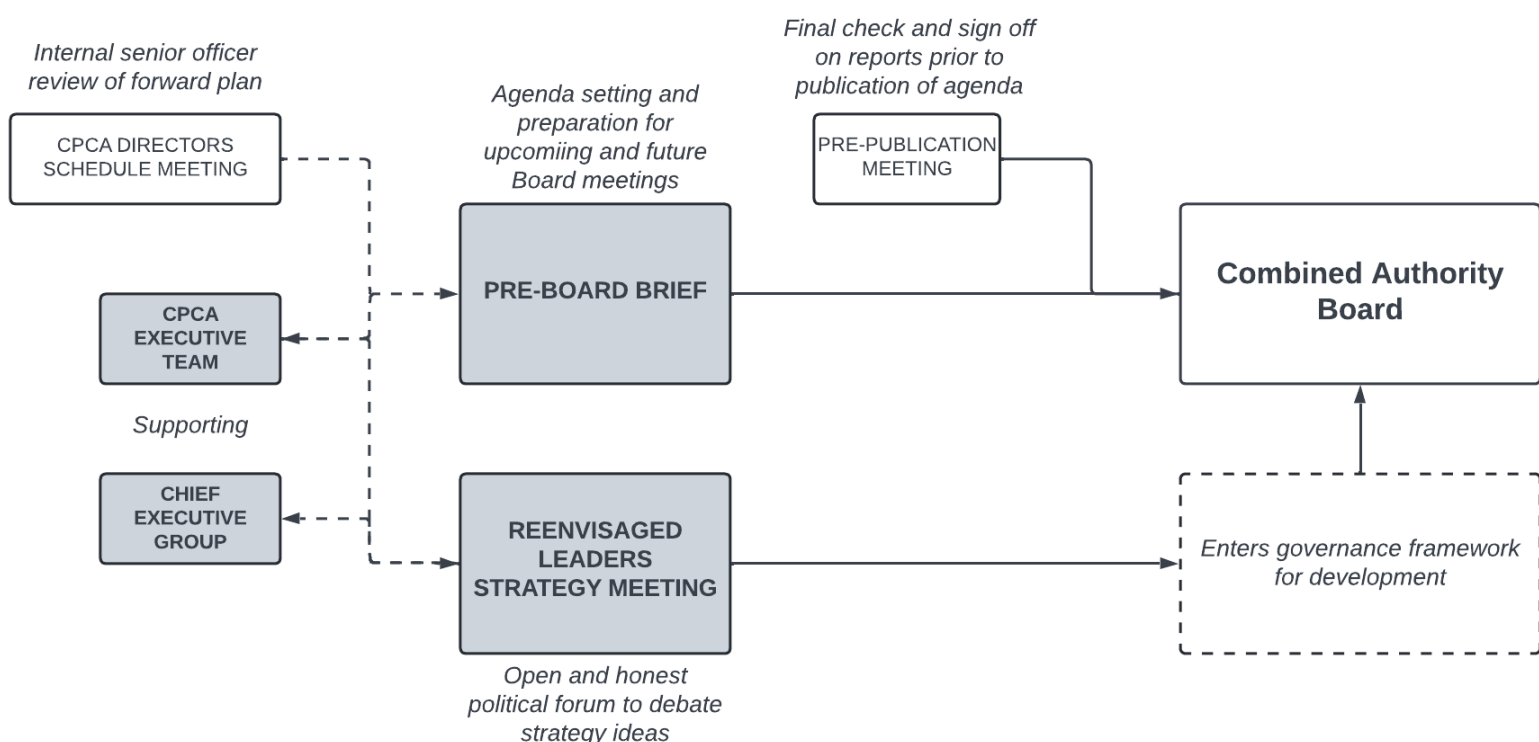
- 6.75 Upon initial review of the existing governance structure at the Combined Authority I noted the existence of the Leaders Strategy Meeting as the only 'safe policy space' supporting the Board and Committees. By safe policy space I am referring to a political forum or meeting that is not open to the public where politicians feel they can safely debate and discuss key topics and items.
- 6.76 Such a space would allow open and honest political discussion between Leaders and the Mayor, this would create a forum where they can discuss where they have consensus and where they need to build consensus. It could also play a beneficial role in Board behaviours and debates which are held in an open public forum, by debating political issues and being able to safely disagree out of the public eye Board Members can shape a Board agenda that is focused on items where consensus has been established. This could reduce the levels of open disagreement at Board meetings that portray a negative image of the Combined Authority to the public, government, partners and business.
- 6.77 Such a forum could be created through a reenvisioned Leaders Strategy Meeting and can be supported not only by Combined Authority Officers but also by the proposed Chief Executives Group, Chief Executives could be assigned key workstreams to develop consensus across the region as required in support. This idea was tested at Leaders Strategy Meeting in February 2022 and was supported by the Mayor and Leaders, as a result it has subsequently been added as an objective within the ***Even Better*** transformation project.
- 6.78 LSM at present attempts to fulfil role of pre-Board preparation and forum for strategic policy discussions and new ideas. The meeting of LSM in February 2022 indicated support for these roles being split out to ensure more focus on each specific requirement.
- 6.79 The ***Even Better*** project should seek to develop concrete proposals for this forum as soon as is possible ensuring that it also considers the potential benefits of wider membership from key stakeholders and clear rules of engagement for the forum to operate within. It is important that it makes clear that this is not a forum in which to make final decisions or to pre-determine decisions before they go to Board, but a place to debate ideas and proposals which would then enter the development and engagement phase.
- 6.80 A starter terms of reference for development has been provided to the Transformation Project and is attached at Appendix C.

Pre-Board Brief

- 6.81 We briefly referred to the Pre-Board process under culture and behaviours and the potential benefits of early, engaged review of future business and preparation for Board meetings. Having a dedicated meeting of Board Membership to review the forward plan, upcoming agenda items and preparations for Board meetings can deliver significant benefits to decision-making.
- 6.82 An effective Pre-Board process can remove surprises from Board agendas as the membership will know what is coming up and why. Such a process will also provide a key opportunity to give an early steer on required report content to inform decision-making to officers and can also act as a clearance for draft reports intended to be submitted to upcoming Board meetings.
- 6.83 Such a meeting would provide an opportunity for political ownership and review of the Forward Plan, this would allow Board members to challenge the inclusion of items on the forward plan as well as debate required inclusions. It would be important to have clear terms of reference to avoid debating items prior to the public Board meeting, avoiding any potential for pre-determination of items.

- 6.84 There is already a Pre-Publication meeting that provides an update on progress on the production of reports just prior to publication for the Board, this a meeting attended by the Mayor in their capacity as Chair of the Board to act as a final clearance prior to agenda dispatch. This meeting serves a different purpose to a Pre-Board Brief and it is proposed that it is maintained.
- 6.85 The Pre-Board Brief proposal for a more focused forum rather than the current LSM arrangement was tested at Leaders Strategy Meeting in February 2022 and was supported, it has also been universally supported during this review. As a result this has also been included as an objective within the **Even Better** transformation project.
- 6.86 A starter terms of reference for development has been provided to the Transformation Project and is attached at Appendix D. Such a meeting would not need to be held in person and could be supported virtually to limit travel and time commitment.

Illustration F - Potential Supporting Governance for Board



Committees

- 6.87 There are 3 thematic Executive Committees in operation at the Combined Authority plus the Employment Committee, Chairs of all 3 Executive Committees were engaged as part of the review to determine how those committees operated and what the key barriers were to them being effective and adding value. There was a clear consensus view that Executive Committees should:

- ☐ play a key role in the development of key thematic strategy
- ☐ have appropriate delegations to allow them to oversee delivery of key strategy
- ☐ ensure wider engagement with appropriate partners takes place
- ☐ play a key in the performance management of key activity and projects within that thematic area.

Strategy Role

- 6.88 The key barriers to fulfilling the roles set above according to Executive Committee chairs and supported through the views of Board membership were a lack of delegation to support decision-making and a lack of clarity on the strategic objectives of the Combined Authority.

- 6.89 Without a strategically focused board and clarity of committee delegations and responsibilities it is easier for the focus of committees to drift into operational matters and for other issues to be considered in multiple places without a clear idea of the decision-making route. There was evidence of where this was happening. For instance, some chairs felt disconnected from the strategic level structure and were uncertain how their decisions, issues or ideas could reach, inform and influence strategy. The inevitable conclusion for some committees is therefore an experience of not being involved or valued.
- 6.90 Having a more strategic Board as mentioned previously in the report provides a clear opportunity to empower executive committees with the responsibility for developing key thematic strategy. This role already exists within the CPCA framework, with each committee able to utilise subject matter focus to develop strategy proposals for Board to consider and approve. The key change therefore is ensuring that once approved by Board the delivery of the strategy returns to the Executive Committee with responsibility for overseeing delivery.
- 6.91 A delivery oversight role does also exist at present with action plans, performance reports and key projects reviewed by committees, particularly the Skills Committee. However these committees do not currently have the supporting delegation to allow them to make key decisions in support of strategy.

Delegations

- 6.92 Executive Committees could be given delegation to allow them to make approvals, develop policy and take decisions to deliver a relevant strategy. Key officers, Chairs and other Board Members agreed with the view that wider delegations were required at committees to both empower them, make better use of thematic specific membership and expertise and to free up the Board for a more strategic focus.
- 6.93 Consideration could therefore be given to providing delegations from the Board to relevant Executive Committees for the approval of schemes that have already been included within the Medium Term Financial Plan and therefore already agreed for development by the Board.
- 6.94 This would empower the Executive Committees to approve the drawdown of funds rather than having to debate, consider, and then make a recommendation to the Board for further consideration. This could be further extended to other approvals if the Board has already agreed a budget for the delivery of programmes/ projects.
- 6.95 It would also provide the Executive Committees with an ability to make approval decisions that would assist delivery of key strategy that they are empowered to oversee delivery of.
- 6.96 There is also an opportunity to provide delegation to Executive Committees for the approval of recurrent funding streams such as the Adult Education Budget, this would empower the Executive Committees and reduce transactional business going to Board.
- 6.97 The *Even Better* transformation project could examine approval levels and decisions that could be delegated down to Exec Committee level which would help create a more strategic focus at Board.
- 6.98 Empowering the Executive Committees with such delegations would require greater trust within the decision-making process, clarity of objectives and roles, co-production values and approaches and utilisation of officer expertise can assist in delivering this trust.

Thematics

- 6.99 The thematic areas reflected in the Executive Committees ideally should be based upon the key responsibilities and the strategic objectives of the Combined Authority, these have clearly changed since the current structure was created.

- 6.100 We have already referred to the need for clarity on the strategic objectives, once this clarity is confirmed by the Board they may wish to consider a structure best suited to delivery. The detail below however seeks to provide suggestion on what the structure could involve.
- 6.101 The responsibilities around Housing have changed after the Government funded Affordable Housing Programme came to an end in March 2022, as a result the Combined Authority needs to determine where it can add value regarding Housing and Communities moving forward. A report is going to Board in June 2022 regarding the proposed role of the Combined Authority in supporting the future delivery of housing and to consider its future role in relation to community housing.
- 6.102 The majority view ascertained through the review was that there is no longer a need for a specific Executive Committee for Housing and Communities, however there was agreement that there was a housing role vital for the Combined Authority to seek to fill. That being a focus on infrastructure in order to support Constituent Councils in building houses, such a role would see the Combined Authority act as an 'unblocker' to provide access to potential developments.
- 6.103 There is also a regional role (and wider) for the Combined Authority as the accountable body for the Greater South East Net Zero Hub, this leads to the potential role it can play in a regional topic like the retrofitting of the housing stock via LAD2 and the sustainable warmth programme.
- 6.104 When asked what is the gap in the Combined Authority governance structure as part of the review, voting Board Members returned several consistent answers:
- ☐ Strategic regional planning on key items
 - ☐ Regional Spatial Strategy support
 - ☐ Sustainable growth
 - ☐ Greater economy focus
 - ☐ Integration
- 6.105 Strategic regional planning references the potential housing role above for the Combined Authority to focus on infrastructure from a housing perspective, it also relates with Regional Spatial Strategy. Long term planning approaches and strategies have been developed by each Constituent Authority but not in a regional context, the Combined Authority could play a significant role in developing a regional approach and providing advice and support to Constituents.
- 6.106 The West of England Combined Authority Spatial Development Strategy is an example of what could be achieved, noting that CPCA does not currently have the necessary powers that West of England and some others have. The Mayor can however produce a Strategic Spatial Plan which would need to be approved by the Board.
- 6.107 In line with the creation of a more strategic Board these thematic areas could become part of the Boards focus moving forward, it could be supported on such matters by the reenvisioned Leaders Strategy Meeting, Chief Executives Group and the Cambridgeshire Public Service Board on key strategic matters.
- 6.108 The alternative would to create a focused Executive Committee that could develop policy and strategy proposals on such matters for the Board to consider, this would create an opportunity to consider these matters in a focused way alongside Transport and Infrastructure.
- 6.109 Infrastructure and Transport is key to strategic planning, as are the housing roles mentioned above, examining policy and strategy for these themes under one committee could potentially help drive greater consideration of integration and prevent silo working or silo strategy development. Creating such a thematic focus would be ambitious but it would provide an opportunity for further focus on

big ticket regional items including broadband connectivity, developing strategy proposals for Board consideration and reducing the burden of business at Board meetings.

- 6.110 The downside of such a proposal would be the potential burden of business on the newly created Executive Committee where there is already sufficient business on transport matters alone.
- 6.111 Sustainable growth which can now be supported through the Sustainable Growth Ambition Statement could potentially cover:
- ☐ Sustainability support
 - ☐ Inclusive Growth
 - ☐ Climate Change
 - ☐ Biodiversity
 - ☐ Water Supply
 - ☐ Learning from large corporations sustainability initiatives
 - ☐ Supporting Small Business with sustainability initiatives
- 6.112 This would provide an opportunity for further focus on big ticket regional items such as Water Supply which again would help with the burden of business at Combined Authority Board, as well as placing a wider focus on the SGAS.
- 6.113 A need to place a greater focus on the economy was another theme raised in the review that it was felt if addressed could lead to more effective decision-making. This has been highlighted already within the report with reference to the West Midlands approach of creating an Economic Growth Committee, the development of the SGAS has created a wider focus on economic objectives that will also place more focus on economy at the Combined Authority Board.
- 6.114 The Combined Authority needs to consider if keeping this economic focus at board level or creating an Economic Growth Committee would best meet its needs. The West Midlands approach was taken in order to:
- ☐ Provide focused and political leadership on the development of a regional approach to inclusive economic growth policies and plans, including the development and delivery of regional economic strategies, policies and plans, to be agreed with CA Board where appropriate
 - ☐ Lead on the delivery of a West Midlands Jobs Plan, ensuring local communities are linked to new jobs and opportunities
 - ☐ Provide regional support to businesses, including the implementation of a new business support programme
 - ☐ Develop regional innovation strategy and supporting programmes
 - ☐ Ensure that economic strategy, and interventions flowing from it, are underpinned by a robust evidence base (including that derived from key sectors and places) which is reviewed and updated on a regular basis
 - ☐ To consider and advise upon major policy change within the portfolio
 - ☐ Provide leadership in developing an approach to future devolution of powers from Government to the region on matters of economic growth

- 6.115 The final point above is one that should be considered as a requirement at all Executive Committees in relation to respective thematic areas.
- 6.116 A selection of proposed options for a governance structure that reflects the content above is attached at Appendix E to assist with considerations.

Support

- 6.117 In the 'Governance as an enabler' section of this report I refer to the potential benefits of increased co-production and collaboration that could be brought through closer working between Combined Authority Officers and Constituent Council Officers. I also refer to the importance of informal governance mechanisms and benefits of adopting steering committees to support Executive Committees.
- 6.118 The recommendation made is that the principle of 'steering committees' consisting of appropriate Constituent Council lead officers be set up to support formal Combined Authority Committees (other than Board and Regulatory Committees) be adopted.
- 6.119 The *Even Better* transformation project has the development of informal governance mechanisms as a workstream and will look to develop more detailed proposals, it is recommended that it takes note of this report when doing so.
- 6.120 A selection of proposed options for a governance structure that illustrates steering groups is attached at Appendix E to assist with considerations.

Operation

- 6.121 Council Leaders are already busy individuals with significant demands placed upon them through their Constituent Council roles. Although a move back to bi-monthly Board meetings supported by a more strategic workload should reduce the burden of business at Board meetings, Leaders will also be committing time to attendance and preparation for the proposed Pre-Board Brief and the reenvisioned Leaders Strategy Meeting.
- 6.122 It is important to consider that Constituent Leaders have busy roles within their constituent authorities but that they also have a commitment to provide required space for Combined Authority business. The position that the Combined Authority currently finds itself in requires collective leadership and effort from all of its parts, especially its constituent membership. Whilst appreciating the busy roles and commitment already provided Leaders may wish to consider how they can provide additional time to Combined Authority business whilst officers considered how to make more effective use of the time that is provided.
- 6.123 Benefits of engaging wider Constituent Councillor membership is referred to earlier in this report. Other than increasing engagement, widening out the membership of Executive Committees so that they are based on the relevant Lead Members from within each constituent authority would provide portfolio specific knowledge, expertise and engagement between the Combined Authority and Constituent Councils.

Business Board

- 6.124 The Levelling Up White Paper signalled an end to the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) review, with a conclusion that the Government is encouraging the integration of LEPs with Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs). The White Paper states that *"Government is encouraging the integration of LEPs and their business boards into MCAs, the GLA and County Deals, where these exist."*

- 6.125 The White Paper further states that *“The UK Government recognises the convening power of these groups and is committed to working with stakeholders to strengthen and deepen partnership working to drive local growth.”*
- 6.126 CPCA is already ahead of the curve as it has already integrated its LEP arrangements into its governance function through the Business Board.
- 6.127 This review was not tasked with consideration of the LEP review, however it notes that Business Boards are the preferred model of Governance. Government guidance advises that Business Boards should have an advisory, consultative role, as well as a degree of independence from the political process. There should also be an open recruitment of Business Board membership.
- 6.128 The Business Board was commented on through interviews with all Leaders and the Mayor, all of whom provided consistent feedback on the current Business Board arrangements to levelling degrees. This feedback had several consistent themes, those being:
- ☐ There was a perception that the Business Board operated without sufficient oversight and transparency
 - ☐ Constituent Council officers were rarely invited to Business Board which created perception of disconnection and lack of inclusivity
 - ☐ Political discomfort existed at Business Board role of signing off the expenditure of public money
 - ☐ Quoracy is perceived to be an issue
 - ☐ Public engagement is perceived to be an issue, particularly around the process for public questions
- 6.129 As mentioned above this review was not tasked with consideration of the LEP review and the timeframe did not allow for detailed consideration of the Levelling Up White Paper, consideration on how to address perceptions above should be considered as part of a more detailed analysis of the future role of the Business Board.
- 6.130 What is clear however is that politically the Business Board is seen to best serve the Combined Authority as an advisory and consultative body, the key question therefore is what is the future role of the Business Board in relation to Economic Growth?
- 6.131 As this review did not go into detail reviewing supporting documentation and operation of the Business Board it cannot provide a view on the points raised above, other than to identify that there is a disconnect between Constituent Leaders and the functions of the Business board.
- 6.132 I understand that the Business Board itself is developing proposals for the Board to consider regarding its future role, the Combined Authority should work closely with the Business Board in developing this work further. A lot will depend on how the Board wish to proceed in creating a greater economic focus on its work and what governance structure it requires to support that focus. This is picked up in the potential options for the governance framework detailed in Appendix E.

Overview & Scrutiny

- 6.133 The review of Overview and Scrutiny Committee agendas, its work programme and evidence provided to this review indicates that Overview and Scrutiny has not yet established its role and place within the Combined Authority. This places it in a similar position to Overview and Scrutiny functions at other Combined Authorities, Greater Manchester Combined Authority has commissioned a review by the Centre for Governance & Scrutiny to help identify value adding roles for the function in a specific Greater Manchester setting. CPCA would benefit from taking a similar approach of seeking to identify its scrutiny identify in its Combined Authority context.

- 6.134 The function is not year clear on how best to deliver accountability of the Mayor and of decision-making, although it has held Mayor question time sessions it would benefit from developing this process so roles and responsibilities are understood. The Committee has considered strategic items such as the devolution deal which is a positive step towards Combined Authority scrutiny which should aim to be region specific and strategic.
- 6.135 In the CfGS guidance on combined authority scrutiny (2020), it states that:
- “Scrutiny in combined authorities is distinct to that in local authorities. Although legal powers and modes of operation are superficially similar, the demands of Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA) operations must lead to a significantly different approach”.*
- 6.136 This different approach needs to recognise that there is significant divergence in the needs and experiences of individual MCAs as well. There is no single model of effective MCA scrutiny, and as such effective models need to be built from the ground up. CfGS provided a critique of the function for CPCA in 2021 and made a number of recommendations to assist the function in its development, there is an action plan to deliver these recommendations which is being delivered and will help establish the function more generally.
- 6.137 Leaders and Officers felt that Overview & Scrutiny needed to be more focused on core issues in order to add value to the governance framework, the core issues given being challenging the development of strategic objectives/ priorities and examination of the Combined Authority purpose.
- 6.138 Establishing a role at Combined Authority level however is difficult when the Combined Authority objectives are not clear. Engagement has taken place with the Statutory Scrutiny Officer to discuss how to move the function forward and develop a CPCA scrutiny identity, with agreement that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee itself should take the lead in developing the function with a focus on:
- ❑ Identify the potential role scrutiny can play in a strategic context of the Combined Authority – how to play an active role in the development of big plans, policies and the budget, and in the way that the authority prioritises its work
 - ❑ How to deliver Combined Authority accountability for the region – how to provide proportionate and constructive challenge to the Mayor and wider Combined Authority, their activities and performance
 - ❑ How to create a scrutiny system which does not need to undergo fundamental review every few years, but one which can develop according to need. To do this Overview & Scrutiny needs to identify what are the key themes for Scrutiny in the CPCA context?
 - ❑ scrutiny will need to be seen by councillors, and others, as being a vital part of the local governance landscape at the Combined Authority – how do we make this happen?
- 6.139 During the course of the review it was suggested that there needed to be more Scrutiny Committees with comparisons made with Greater Manchester (4 committees) and West Midlands (2 committees). All other Mayoral Combined Authorities however have 1 scrutiny committee and until CPCA scrutiny establishes its role in a regional context I do not see a need for additional committees to be considered. West Midlands for example has established an additional transport focused scrutiny committee, this is because the function has agreed it has a specific regional transport accountability and challenge role to hold to account a vast transport function.
- 6.140 Other Combined Authorities have also undertaken Mayoral question time accountability sessions in order to hold the Mayor to account. This has taken place once to date at CPCA from a scrutiny perspective, the Chair of Overview an Scrutiny described the session as a good example of providing challenge to the Mayor. The Mayor during interviews for this review agreed that these

session were important to proving accountability and welcomed the potential for them to develop further.

- 6.141 Developing these sessions around key themes once established would be beneficial.
- 6.142 As Portfolio Leads at the Combined Authority develop to genuinely take a lead on portfolio matters the function should give consideration to how it can effectively hold them to account on specific portfolio matters and performance, linking to the established key themes of focus.
- 6.143 Consideration could be given to Scrutiny members being tasked (individually) to keep a watching brief on the transaction of business by portfolio holders. This might, for example, see a scrutiny member maintaining an ongoing awareness of work being carried out under the direction of a portfolio holders, supporting the scrutiny committee's work on both performance review and policy development.
- 6.144 There is a role for challenging budget scrutiny within a Combined Authority setting which has been attempted at CPCA, there is however room for improvement on the timing of budget scrutiny challenge and the information provided to scrutiny by officers. West Midlands have a specific Mayoral question time as part of the budget setting process , such a process at CPCA could assist in undertaking budget scrutiny and delivering Mayoral accountability.
- 6.145 We refer to the adoption of principles of decision-making in 5.28 to 5.34, these are generally considered within the call-in process at Local Authorities and Combined Authorities across the Country. If the principles are adopted then the call-in process should be updated to require an explanation of the reasons as to why the call-in is being requested, that reasoning should be based on providing a justification as to how the principles of effective decision-making have not been followed.
- 6.146 Such a step would bring the Combined Authority into line with established call-in procedures and enable the Monitoring Officer to consider call-ins from a process rather than a political perspective as at present the constitution does not require a call-in to justify reasoning in support.

Audit & Governance

- 6.147 The Audit and Governance Committee's role is to review the Combined Authority's financial affairs, internal control, corporate governance arrangements and risk management. The Committee is well respected within the Combined Authority and amongst its membership and the Chair in particular is considered to play a key role in driving its business.
- 6.148 Engagement with the Audit & Governance Committee itself and conversations with its Chair revealed a lack of clarity on where they felt they fitted into the overall operation of the Combined Authority and to what extent they should seek to access information such as performance data.
- 6.149 Set tasks were understood such as approving the annual statement of accounts, internal audit and external audit functions and analysis of corporate risk. From a governance perspective the Committee has reviewed the governance of training companies and has been involved in this review.
- 6.150 The Chair and Committee membership were less sure of what the role of the Committee was in relation to:
 - ☐ how to add value with oversight on Risk Management Strategy
 - ☐ oversight role in relation to the Assurance Framework in ensuring that it is being complied with and being developed
 - ☐ performance management oversight role and what data should be provided

- 6.151 The Combined Authority has established an Officer Group called Performance and Risk Committee (PARC), the committee's role is to ensure consistent and effective performance and risk management across the organisation in support of the Assurance Framework and Risk Management Strategy by:
- (i) reviewing, and identifying any areas of concern in, performance management
 - (ii) reviewing, and identifying areas of concern in, risk management
 - (iii) making recommendations to programme owners about issues requiring their attention,
 - (iv) escalating to the Executive Team and/or the Audit & Governance Committee issues requiring their attention.
- 6.152 The Committee's scope covers all projects/programmes where the Combined Authority has accountability for public money, including those agreed by the Board, by the Business Board, and funds managed on behalf of central government. Project Initiation Documents (PIDs) can be considered for approval, and a full lifecycle analysis of the Monitoring & Evaluation programme may include outcomes from closed projects. Exceptions include organisational and personal performance, change control, commercial issues, project/programme plans and stage gateway reviews other than closure.
- 6.153 PARC should have a clearly established link to the Audit & Governance Committee. The PARC terms of reference do refer to escalating issues to Audit & Governance, additional engagement should be undertaken with the Committee to ensure that membership understands the role of PARC and how it can best serve the committee in fulfilling its terms of reference.
- 6.154 Guidance and training to support the Audit & Governance Committee would be beneficial, particularly in utilising PARC moving forward. This could also be provided in regards to the Assurance Framework where the Committee currently receive reports on required updates for recommendation to Combined Authority Board.
- 6.155 The Audit & Governance Committee is required to annually review the assurance framework to ensure it adequately addresses risks and priorities including governance arrangements of significant partnerships, this role should be developed further to ensure that the Assurance Framework is in line with best practice and is being complied with.
- 6.156 The equivalent committee at West Midlands Combined Authority has a more significant role in regards to the Assurance Framework. It not only oversaw the development of a Single Assurance Framework approach that applies to all funding, it also receives from the Programme Assurance & Appraisal Team quarterly assurance thematic performance information to provide oversight of the transition to the Single Assurance Framework and the compliance of projects and programmes with required standards.

Behaviours

- 6.157 The Audit & Governance Committee also has a code of conduct responsibility, that being:
- ☐ Ensure the Combined Authority has effective policies and processes in place to ensure high standards of conduct by its Members and Co-opted Members;
 - ☐ Assisting the Members and Co-opted Members to observe the Code of Conduct;
 - ☐ Advising the Combined Authority on the adoption or revision of the Code of Conduct and monitor its operation;
 - ☐ Advising on training and overseeing the effectiveness of any training for Members and Co-opted Members on matters relating to the Code of Conduct;

- 6.158 Given the issues regarding behaviour at Combined Authority Board meetings it is surprising that the Committee has not included behaviours on their work programme or been engaged to assist in member observation of the Code of Conduct and/or advise on related training.

Ongoing Progress

- 6.159 It is important to reference ongoing progress within the Combined Authority to address some of the matters raised in this section of the report, these include:
- ☐ Endorsement from LSM for the creation of a more strategically focused Board
 - ☐ Endorsement from LSM for the creation of a focused pre-Board brief process and meeting
 - ☐ Endorsement from LSM for the creation of a safe strategic policy space for Board membership
 - ☐ Paper to be taken to June meeting of Board on future of the Housing & Committees function
 - ☐ Creation of the Performance and Risk Committee
 - ☐ Review already undertaken by Centre for Governance & Scrutiny of scrutiny function with action plan for improvement

Conclusion summary

Identified improvements will only happen with strong and visible collective leadership supported by a commitment from all parties towards improvement. Central to this are the required foundations and fundamentals set out earlier in this report, without improvements here the governance framework can only deliver so far.

The governance framework can improve and deliver significant benefits, the Board should consider the wide range of observations and conclusions within the report in order to enhance the framework as well as the numerous recommendations.

The governance structure itself needs to be simple, supported, with clarity on roles and capable of adding real value to the decision-making process. The Mayoral role requires clarity in regards to their priorities and how these impact overall objectives, additionally the Mayor should be supported through governance to develop their policy agenda.

A more strategically focused Board needs to be able to focus on its core role and regional big ticket items, with enhanced support through a Pre-Board Brief and strategy support through a reenvisioned LSM.

Consideration needs to be given to empowering executive committees with clarity of role supported by trusted delegations, creating appropriate focus on the economy, utilising supporting steering committees and developing co-production approaches across partnerships. Possible governance structure options are set out for the Board to consider in support.

The Scrutiny function would benefit from the identification of regional scrutiny themes directly related to the Combined Authority objectives and developing its ability to deliver accountability. Scrutiny's role should be recognised as twofold – firstly, to contribute to policy development in respect of high profile, complex issues affecting the whole of the region, and secondly to review and evaluate the performance of the Mayor and Combined Authority, and the way it works with its partners to deliver for local people.

Audit & Governance Committee can too enhance its role in a number of areas such as performance and compliance.

Recommendations

- 20 Combined Authority Board and Executive Team give consideration to the conclusions and issues raised within the Governance Framework section of this report and produce an action plan in response**
- 21 The Combined Authority Board reverts to a bi-monthly cycle with an amended terms of reference designed to place a more strategic focus on its business, noting the conclusions and suggestions made within this report**
- 22 A Pre-Board brief meeting and process be developed and established at the earliest opportunity through the *Even Better* transformation project, noting the conclusions and suggestions made within this report**
- 23 Leaders Strategy Meeting be reenvisioned to take on the role set out under Strategic Growth Forum in section 6.75 to 6.80 of this report**
- 24 The Combined Authority develops an Executive Committee recommendation template (as part of a pack) for inclusion in Board papers, to ease the process of considering Executive Committee recommendations and reduce paperwork**
- 25 The Combined Authority Board considers how it wishes to place more of a focus on delivery of its Economic Strategy and the Sustainable Growth Ambition Statement, either through the Board itself or by creating an Economic Growth Executive Committee with responsibility for the delivery of the Economic Growth Strategy**
- 26 Consideration be given to providing delegations from the Board to relevant Executive Committees for the approval of schemes that have already been budgeted for and approved for development and delivery, empowering those Committees to own delivery of key thematic strategy**
- 27 *Even Better* Transformation Project reviews wider approvals that could be delegated down to Executive Committees**
- 28 The Combined Authority give consideration to creating a Member Friendly report template, specific to the needs and identify of the Combined Authority, focused on providing the right information to inform effective decision-making**
- 29 The Combined Authority Board considers its voting arrangements in regards to the Business Board representative and wider**
- 30 Consideration be given to the future role of the Business Board, taking into account the Levelling Up White Paper, the future governance framework and the content of this report**
- 31 The Combined Authority Overview & Scrutiny Committee is engaged to identify requirements for reporting in a scrutiny context**
- 32 The Overview & Scrutiny Committee place developing the function and its identity in a Combined Authority context at the centre of its 2022/23 work programme, examining the 4 workstreams identified within this review.**

- 33 The Scrutiny Call-in process as detailed in the Constitution be updated to require justification for a call-in request in line with the principles of decision-making**
- 34 The Combined Authority Board give consideration to amending the thematic focus of its Executive Committees taking into account the conclusions set out in 6.87 to 6.123**
- 35 Support for Audit & Governance Committee be enhanced to ensure clear links exist between the role and information provided to PARC and the Committee**
- 36 The role of Audit & Governance Committee be clarified in regards to performance management and what information it requires to undertake this role**
- 37 The role of the Audit & Governance Committee be enhanced as it applies to the Assurance Framework to ensure that it includes oversight of compliance with the Assurance Framework and best practice development.**
- 38 Audit & Governance Committee be provided with training on its financial management role, key associated skills and how this fits into the Combined Authority context**
- 39 The Combined Authority give consideration to the various options for its governance structure as set out in Appendix E**

Governance Process

- 7.1 There are a number of process improvements that the Combined Authority can consider that will help deliver improvements and support conclusions and recommendations detailed above.
- 7.2 The first of these relates to Mayoral support. The review notes issues with previous support provided through the Mayoral Office and the current commitment to provide recruitment to key Mayoral Office positions, however the existing level of support provided by the Combined Authority to the Mayor is not sufficient to help deliver some of the fundamentals identified in this report.

Pre-Board Brief Process

- 7.3 If adopted the new Pre-Board Brief process can help deliver significant benefits, the *Even Better* transformation project has already been tasked with developing this and associated process. In doing so they should ensure that:
 - ☐ Adequate agenda setting takes place well in advance of Board meetings
 - ☐ There is political input into report requirements particularly from Portfolio Leads
 - ☐ The Mayor as Chair of the Board signs off agenda packs supported by senior officers signing off the quality and content of reports produced by their business areas, this may require amending the Directors Schedule meeting as at present it is attended by officers at too junior a level
 - ☐ Business Board clearance table model for reports prior to agenda dispatch was seen as an example of internal good practice

Post-Meeting Process

- 7.4 Improvements need to be made to process following Board and Committees in relation to actions. Actions are reported to Executive Team however there are regular examples of ownership not being taken for actions to be responded to and reported back.
- 7.5 Committee Services support reported having to invest considerable time into chasing actions, who the leads are for actions and getting responses cleared as a result. They also reported actions going back to Board and Committees that were often prepared by junior officers without senior officer clearance.
- 7.6 Regular review of actions has now become accepted practice at Executive Team, ensuring that senior officers be assigned responsibility for ensuring actions are responded to sits with the Executive Team to deliver.

Forward plan

- 7.7 We have already referred to the importance of the Forward Plan and the current issues with its use and completion. Early identification though this review of lack of ownership and challenge of the Forward Plan led to early changes being made inside the Combined Authority, this involved amended deadlines for additions by officers and review of the Forward Plan by the Executive Team to ensure appropriate challenge was being delivered by officers to added content. Subsequently the Forward Plan would then be reviewed by the Mayor and then considered at LSM before sign off.
- 7.8 The above process should ensure senior officer and political challenge to the content of the Forward Plan and examining why something has been added and if it is necessary, noting a need to list all key decisions. This trialled process should therefore continue but with more vigour from both officers and politicians to iron out continuing issues such as officers not meeting addition deadlines.

Mayoral Decision Notices/ Officer Decision Notices

- 7.9 The review briefly examined the existing process for the production, agreement and publishing of decision notices, particularly given issues with Mayoral Decision Notices not being published on the Combined Authority website. Following review, all signed off Mayoral and Officer Decision Notices have now been published on the website and the transparency pages of the website have been improved to make them more accessible and visible.
- 7.10 There are however wider issues with the current Decision Notice process which places certain responsibilities on the Governance Team rather than the business area leading on the notice. For example chasing of procurement/ finance/ legal information and completion of notices has been left to Governance, along with examples of wider completion of the notices themselves. It is important for consistency and quality that those leading within business areas see through completion of their notices and only provide them to Governance once they have been completed and approved.
- 7.11 Additionally there has been no set timeframe for the publishing of approved notices on the website, engagement with other Mayoral Combined Authorities revealed a standard practice of publication within 3 working days of being received. In order to deliver this it has been proposed that Governance take on the publication role from Communications and publish directly themselves using the Committee Management system. This will provide clarity on roles and also allow Governance to then inform Board and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee when key decisions in particular have been taken.
- 7.12 Without notification it is impossible for the Overview and Scrutiny function to conduct the call-in function which is a key scrutiny function and power. Directly informing the Overview & Scrutiny Committee of decisions should take place within 3 working days of the decision - noting that any key decision of the Mayor, Combined Authority Board, executive committees or an Officer may be

implemented after 5.00pm of the fifth clear working day after the publication of the decision, unless it is called-in.

7.13 Directly informing Overview and Scrutiny Members ensures that they have as much time as is possible and are aware to consider key decisions for call-in.

7.14 An amended Mayoral Decision Notice and Officer Decision Notice process is detailed in Appendix F.

Reporting

7.15 We have already referred to the need to improve reporting to the Board and elsewhere in this review, in particular the information that is required by decision-makers in order to allow them to consider the required information to make an effective decision.

7.16 There is also a need to examine reporting process. Committee Services and the Governance Team have been engaged as part of this review, they identified the following regular issues in relation to reporting from within the Combined Authority:

- ☐ Deadlines missed
- ☐ Lack of business area engagement in responding to report queries
- ☐ Significant chasing required by Committee Services and Governance Team often without response from business areas
- ☐ No updates provided on report production prior to agenda dispatch from certain business areas - *"sometimes the first time you know the report is definitely going ahead is when final version turns up at the deadline"*
- ☐ Report templates are not always followed and appendices are not always submitted with the report
- ☐ Getting report implications completed can take time
- ☐ Authors often provide reports without implications and leave it to Committee Services to chase them

7.17 Committee Services stated that having a 'governance lead' identified in each business area would enable them to engage more effectively on reporting requirements and agenda drafting, such a link would also be beneficial in chasing up post-meeting actions. Issues were reported by Committee Services with knowing who to contact for governance matters within business areas due to the large level of staff turnover, having a lead would hopefully address such an issue.

Minutes Approach

7.18 At present the Board has taken an approach of requiring near verbatim minutes to be produced for its meetings, a similar approach is reflected at other committees across the Combined Authority. This is out of sync with the approach taken at the Constituent Councils within the Combined Authority in all but one case and is not an approach supported at other Combined Authorities.

7.19 Good minutes are recognised as being brief, accurate and precise, providing clear answers to the questions of how, when, why, and by whom the decisions were made. Guidance provided by the Institute for Good Governance and the ICSA (Chartered Governance Institute) state that minutes should not be a verbatim record but should summarise key points and focus on the decision. The reason for the decision should be documented and include sufficient background information for future reference.

7.20 It has also been reported to this review that Minute sign off is an issue for Board and Committees at the Combined Authority. Improvements in Mayoral support staff and having a business area governance lead are seen as ways to rectify the current difficulties that exist.

Committee Services

- 7.21 Good quality Committee Services are key to supporting an efficient and effective governance framework, committee services are currently provided by the Combined Authority Governance Team and through a service level agreement with Cambridgeshire County Councils Democratic Services Team.
- 7.22 We have referred to improvements with the pre and post meeting process, decision notices, forward plan ownership, reporting, business area leads and minute taking above. All of these will assist with the smooth operation of the committee services function.
- 7.23 Workshops with current providers as part of this review also identified concerns regarding the governance and political awareness of Combined Authority staff, this links to the 'governance understanding' conclusions detailed in this report. Concerns were expressed that officers were not aware of the decision-making process, the reporting cycle and its requirements and the local government act requirements for reporting.
- 7.24 Concerns were also expressed about the political awareness of officers, referring to a lack of knowledge around the political make-up, positions and personalities within the Combined Authority. 2 staff lunch and learn sessions delivered by the Governance Team in 2022 also identified these shortcomings which could be overcome through additional training, wider information and informed induction for new staff.

Ongoing Progress

- 7.25 It is important to reference ongoing progress within the Combined Authority to address some of the matters raised in this section of the report such as the Executive Team taking ownership for internal review of the Forward Plan.

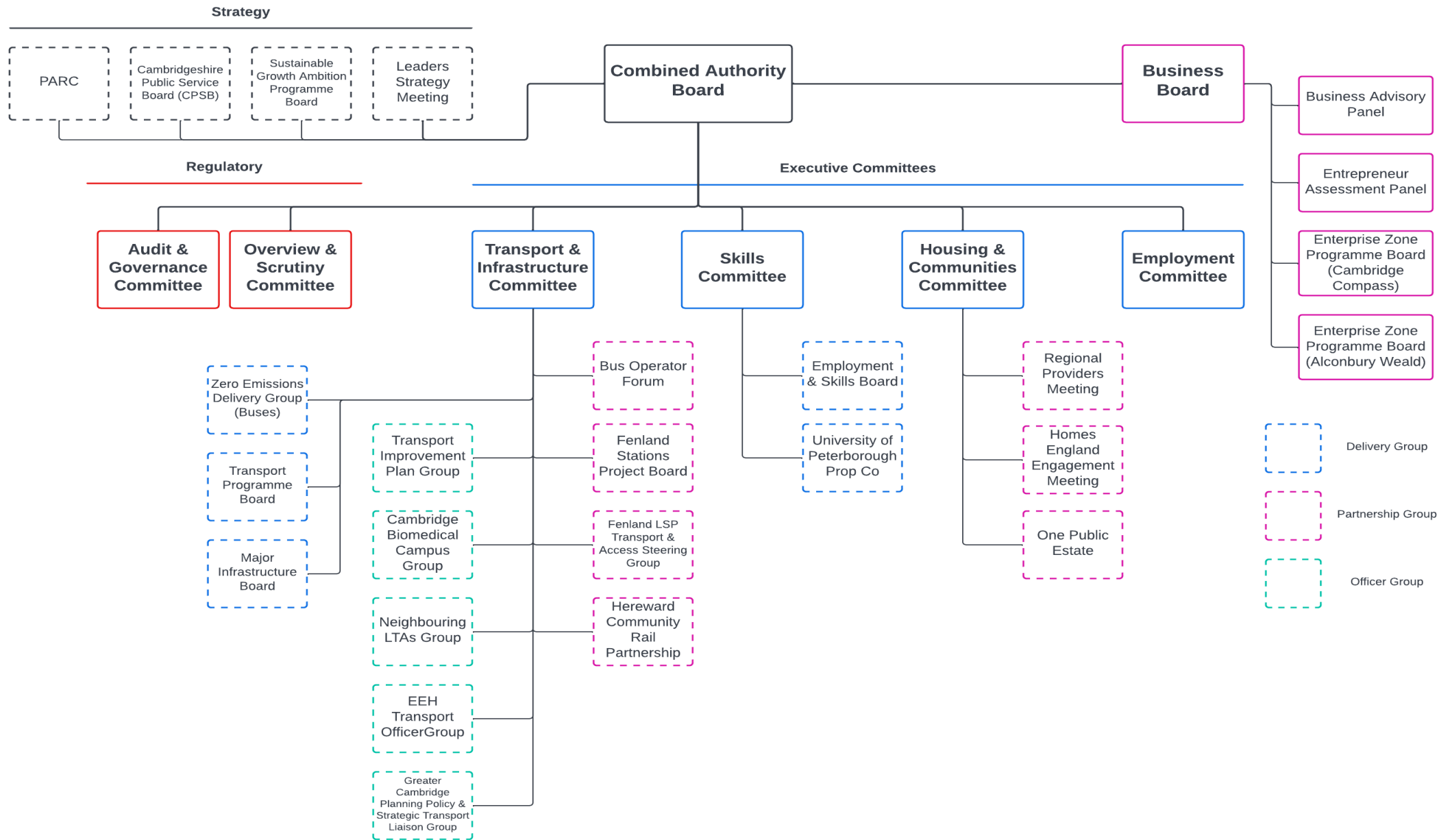
Recommendations

- 40 Combined Authority Board and Executive Team give consideration to the conclusions and issues raised within the Governance Process section of this report and produce an action plan in response**
- 41 The Combined Authority Executive Team takes responsibility for ensuring appropriate officer responses to Board and Committee actions**
- 42 The Forward Plan process trialled since January 2022 be continued to ensure appropriate Political and Senior Officer ownership and oversight**
- 43 The process for Mayoral Decision Notices and Officer Decision Notices set out in Appendix F be adopted**
- 44 Each Combined Authority Business Area designate an officer to act as Governance Lead, acting as the point of contact with Governance Services and Committee Services on Board and Committee requirements**
- 45 The Combined Authority Executive Team considers how to improve organisational culture in regards to meeting governance requirements and delivering good governance behaviours**
- 46 The Combined Authority adopts its approach to minute taking at Board and Committees in line with the conclusions within this report, moving away from verbatim record of meetings to a more focused summarised approach**

Next Steps

- 8.1 The conclusions and recommendations within this report have been developed based on the evidence provided and collected through the review, they are made in the context of the current position (November 2021 to May 2022) that the Combined Authority finds itself in both politically and organisationally. The conclusions and recommendations are based around identification of key areas for improvement.
- 8.2 As a result they are intended to be considered as a starting point based in this context under the assumption that the Combined Authority will continually review the key themes identified within the report and seek to establish and build upon strong governance foundations.
- 8.3 The expectation would be that the Combined Authority considers the content of the report and develops an action plan setting out its response, noting that not all issues raised or conclusions made necessarily have a subsequent recommendation for improvement.
- 8.4 The review has not been tasked with an examination of the Combined Authority's internal systems of control, if the Combined Authority seeks to undertake such a review it is propose that it focuses on the following areas:
 - ❑ Core internal systems of control
 - Performance Management Framework
 - Finance Reporting
 - Risk Management Strategy
 - Internal reporting and escalation processes
 - Internal good governance behaviours
 - ❑ Investment Decision-Making
 - Assurance Framework
 - One Organisation approach
 - Political oversight
 - Golden thread between strategic objectives and project/ programme pipelines
 - Monitoring and Evaluation regime

Appendix A: Full existing CPCA Governance Map



Appendix B: Example Report template

**CAMBRIDGESHIRE
& PETERBOROUGH**
COMBINED AUTHORITY

Agenda Item No:

Add Report Title here:

To:	<i>Which Board/ Committee is this going to</i>
Meeting Date:	<i>Insert date of consideration</i>
Public Report:	<i>Is this a public/ confidential/ exempt report – provide required justifications</i>
Lead Member:	<i>Who is the Lead Member for this report</i>
Responsible Officer:	<i>Who is the responsible officer for this portfolio/ business area</i>
Lead Officer:	<i>Who is the lead officer for this report</i>
Key Decision:	<i>Is this a key decision</i>
Recommendations:	<i>Insert details of the recommendations</i>
Voting Arrangements:	<i>What are the voting arrangements for consideration of this item</i>
Report has been considered by:	<i>Has this report been considered by other Committees or advisory bodies</i>
Purpose:	<i>Set out the ask and reasons for the ask, you should be able to read just the purpose and the recommendations and know what the report is about and the decision(s) required</i>
Strategic Objective(s):	<i>Set out details of the relevant strategic objective(s) the proposal fits under to maintain clear golden thread</i>
Background:	<i>Set out the background to the proposal, including a timeline of previous decisions taken</i>
Proposal:	<i>Set out in clear language the proposal and key detail</i>
Alternative Options:	<i>Set out the alternative options considered and reasons why they were not proposed</i>
Engagement:	<i>Who has been engaged in the production of the proposal made within this report</i>
Implications:	<i>Set out the implications (legal/ finance etc), opportunity to include SGAS specific implications</i>
Background Papers:	<i>Provide links to all background papers</i>
Appendices:	<i>Provide links to all appendices</i>

Appendix C: Reenvisaged Leaders Strategy Meeting – starter terms of reference



CAMBRIDGESHIRE & PETERBOROUGH
COMBINED AUTHORITY

[insert title]

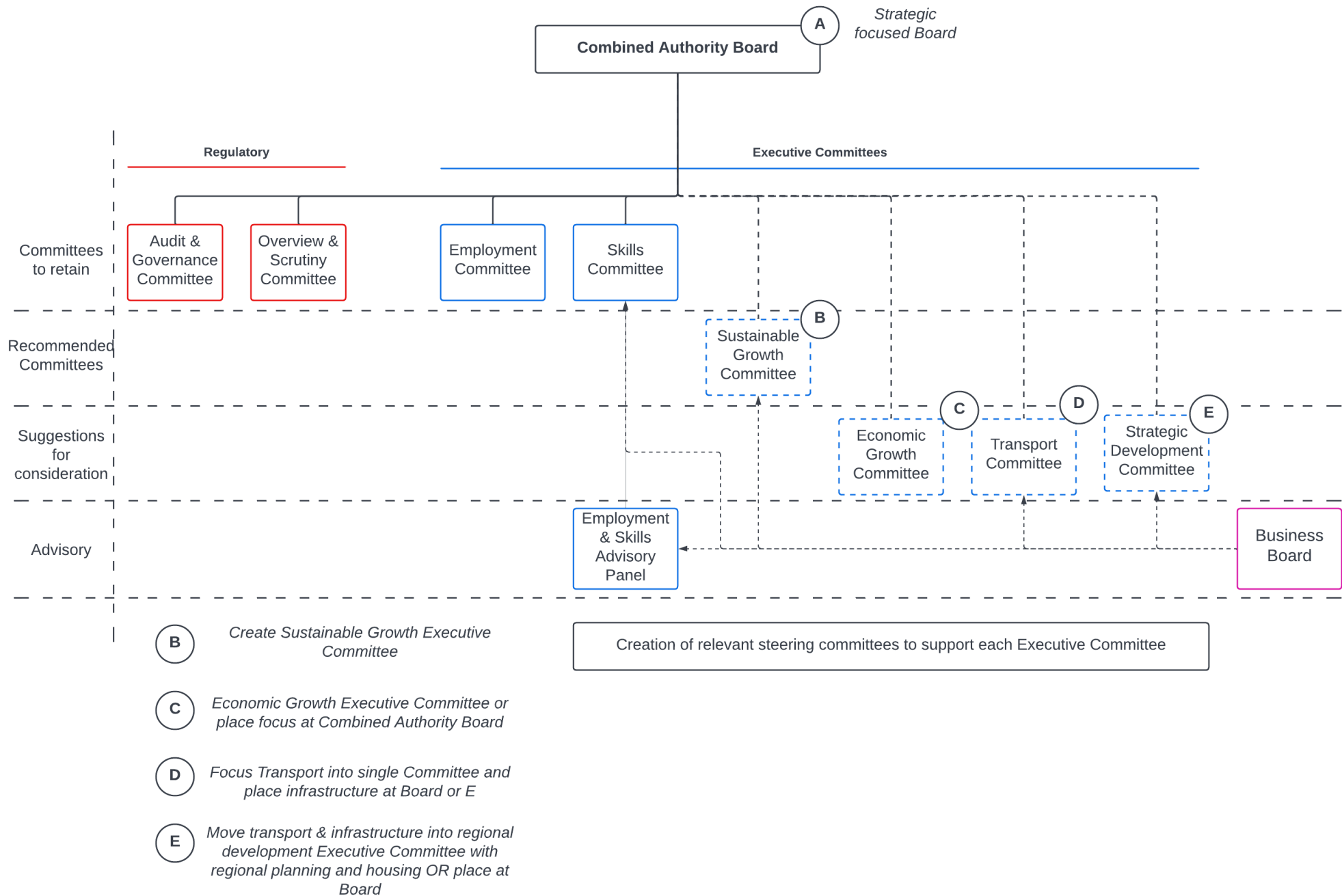
Purpose	To act as the political policy and strategy development forum for the Combined Authority
Accountability	Accountable to the Combined Authority Board
Membership	<i>List CA Board Members</i> <i>What about external partners and stakeholders?</i> <i>What about CA and Constituent Officers?</i>
Chair	The Mayor as Chair of the Combined Authority Board will Chair the Strategic Growth Forum
Frequency	The Forum will meet on a monthly cycle
Support	Support is provided through the Combined Authority Executive Team and the Combined Authority Chief Executives Group
Servicing	<i>Who will provide servicing arrangements covering coordination and development of agenda, papers and actions?</i> CPCA and Constituent Council Officers will support the Forum as required on appropriate workstreams.
Functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Provide an informal opportunity for the region's political leadership to meet and discuss matters of shared interest <input type="checkbox"/> Receive briefings on region-wide issues impacting Constituent Authorities of the CA and the CA itself <input type="checkbox"/> Provide an opportunity to 'horizon scan' potentially contentious or difficult issues expected to arise in the medium term. <input type="checkbox"/> Debate, discuss and develop key Combined Authority strategy and policy direction <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss and agree devolution approach <input type="checkbox"/> Debate, discuss and develop the regional vision for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough



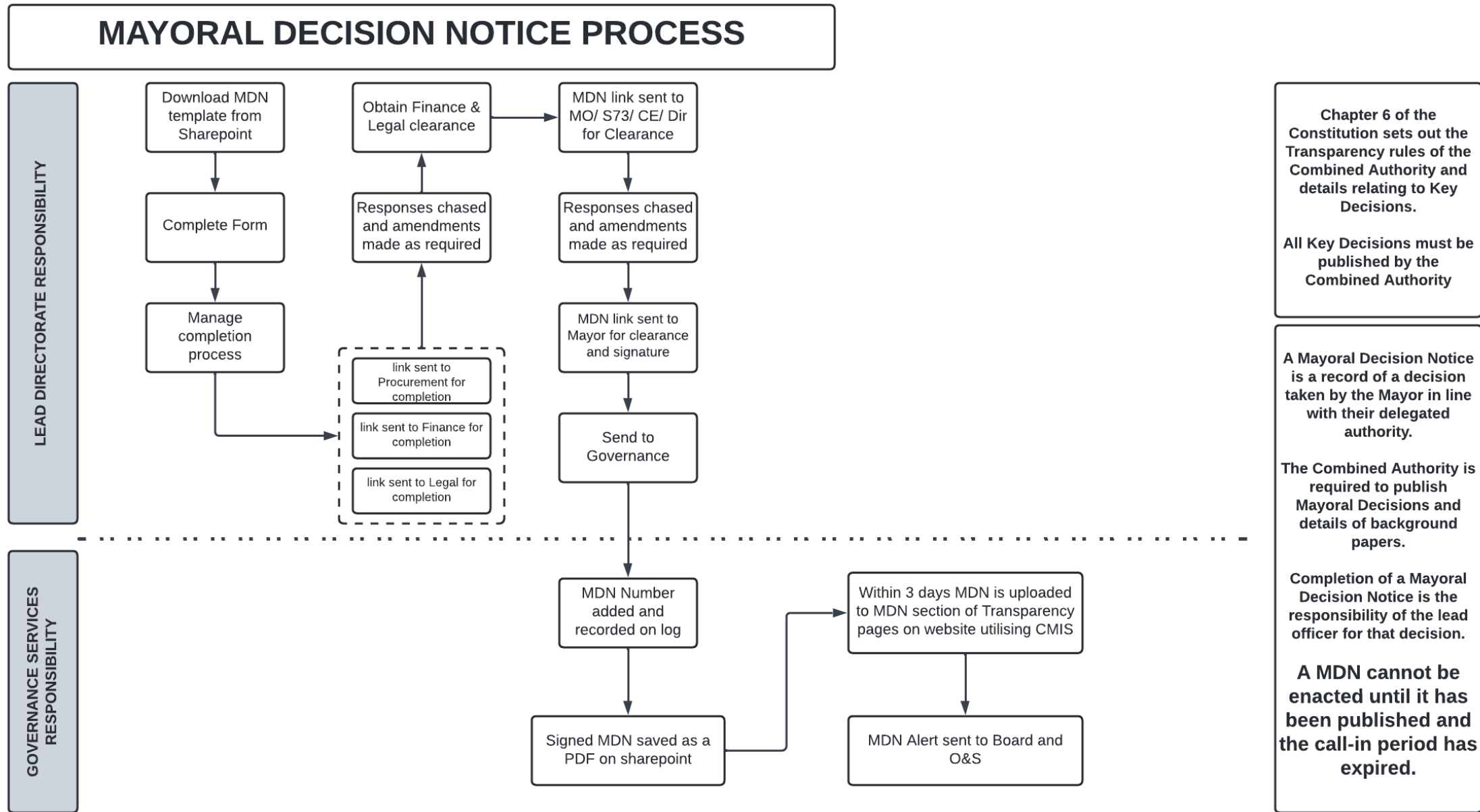
PRE-BOARD BRIEF

Purpose	To engage, brief and prepare Board Members
Accountability	Pre-Board Brief is part of the supporting arrangements in place at the Combined Authority to support the business of the Combined Authority Board
Membership	<i>List members of the Combined Authority Board</i>
Substitutes	Members of the Board can nominate one substitute to attend and act on their behalf, if they cannot attend. This needs to be agreed in advance with the Monitoring Officer
Chair	The Mayor as Chair of the Combined Authority Board is Chair of the Pre-Board Brief
Frequency	Pre-Board Brief will meet on a monthly cycle via Microsoft Teams
Quorum	Mayor plus 3 other Members of the Combined Authority Board
Servicing	The Combined Authority Governance Team working will support the Pre-Board Brief in terms of coordination, agenda, papers and actions
Functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> To brief Board Members on upcoming Board agenda items <input type="checkbox"/> To engage Board Members in the production and content of Board reports prior to publication in order to provide an early steer to content and clearance of drafts <input type="checkbox"/> To owned and manage the Forward Plan <input type="checkbox"/> To engage Board Members in key debates and discussion on topics before they are formally added to Forward Plan <input type="checkbox"/> To provide briefings and oversight of items considered at Executive Committees

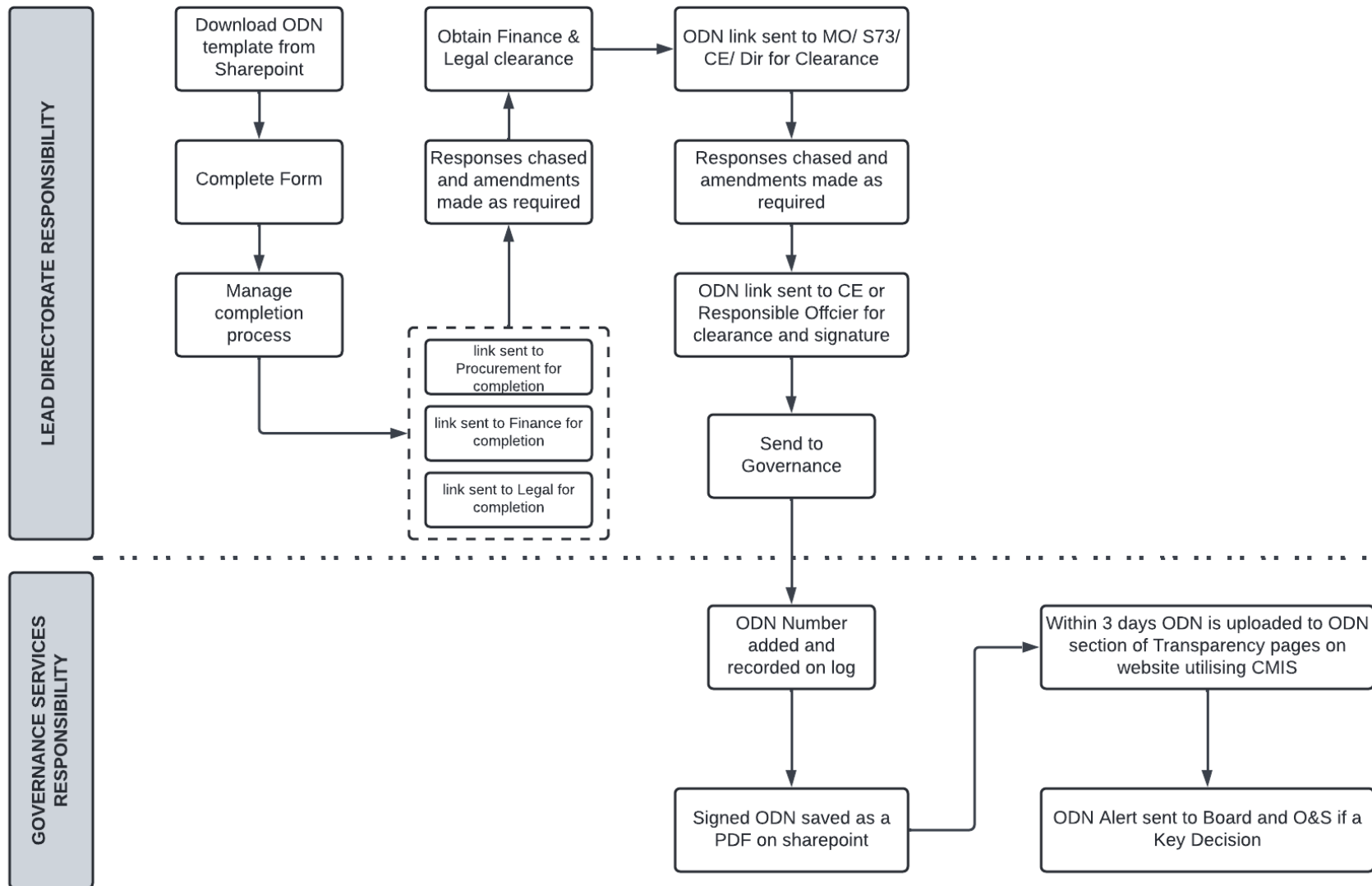
Appendix E: Governance Structure Options



Appendix F: Amended Mayoral and Officer Decision Notice Process chart



OFFICER DECISION NOTICE PROCESS



Chapter 6 of the Constitution sets out the Transparency rules of the Combined Authority and details relating to Key Decisions.

All Key Decisions must be published by the Combined Authority

A Officer Decision Notice is a record of a decision taken by the Officer in line with their delegated authority.

The Combined Authority is required to publish Officer Decisions and details of background papers.

Completion of a Officer Decision Notice is the responsibility of the lead officer for that decision.

A ODN cannot be enacted until it has been published and the call-in period has expired.