

## **CAMBRIDGESHIRE & PETERBOROUGH COMBINED AUTHORITY – OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### **MINUTES**

**Date:** 25 November 2019

**Time:** 11am

**Location:** Huntingdonshire District Council

**Present:**

Cllr Andy Coles  
Cllr Ed Murphy  
Cllr Alex Miscandlon  
Cllr Anne Hay  
Cllr Patricia Jordan  
Cllr Doug Dew  
Cllr Peter Fane  
Cllr Lorna Dupre  
Cllr Alan Sharp  
Cllr Mike Davey  
Cllr Jocelynn Scutt  
Cllr David Connor

Peterborough City Council  
Peterborough City Council  
Fenland District Council  
Fenland District Council  
Huntingdonshire District Council  
Huntingdonshire District Council  
South Cambs District Council  
East Cambs District Council  
East Cambs District Council  
Cambridge City Council  
Cambridgeshire County Council  
Cambridgeshire County Council

**Officers:**

Dermot Pearson  
Rob Emery  
Roger Thompson  
Katarina O'Dell

Interim Monitoring Officer  
Deputy S73 Officer  
Director of Housing and Development  
Interim Scrutiny Officer

#### **1. Apologies**

Apologies received from: Cllr Chamberlain, Cllr Gehring.  
Cllr Fane substituted for Cllr Heylings, Cllr Davey substituted for Cllr Price.

Apologies also received from Kim Sawyer, John Hill and Jon Alsop.

#### **2. Declaration of Interest**

Cllr Davey declared a non-pecuniary interest as his wife is an Assistant Director at Peterborough City Council and Cambridgeshire County Council in Housing matters.

### **3. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 28 October 2019 were agreed and signed by the Chair with the following amendments:

That the wording on frequency of Overview & Scrutiny Committee meetings be corrected to state that the Committee would continue to meet monthly.

That the Transport Chair and Officer would attend the Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting in December, not November.

It was also noted that the Chair had not yet received updates from the Mayor, as agreed at last Overview & Scrutiny meeting on 28 October 2019.

As part of the Minutes item, it was requested that Receipt of Combined Authority Responses to Overview & Scrutiny Questions is added as a standing item to all future agendas.

### **4. Public Questions**

The Chair confirmed that there had been no questions received from members of the public.

### **5. Combined Authority Draft Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan**

Deputy S73 Officer explained the Committee would have the opportunity to look at the Draft Budget and Medium-term Financial Plan three times and explained the process the Combined Authority had gone through so far in terms of the next year's Budget and that the consultation would be starting on Thursday 28 November 2019 and concluding on 31 December 2019.

The Committee would have the opportunity to look at this report again at its December meeting, which will be during the consultation period and would have the opportunity to draft a response to go back into the consultation process and would be responded to at the January meeting of the Combined Authority Board.

The final look at the Budget paper would be at January Committee meeting, which will be two days before the Budget would be presented to the Combined Authority Board.

Deputy S73 Officer presented and explained to the Committee the draft, timetable and principles that had been taken into account when drafting the Budget. He explained that while the key overarching objective was to set an affordable balanced budget, the Combined Authority had gone beyond that and developed its budget in line with key principles that had been established through feedback from Members and Officers throughout the process.

The development process had included Directors, Project Teams and Finance to achieve accuracy and promote ownership throughout the Combined Authority, ensuring all of its available resources are utilised while still setting an affordable budget.

Deputy S73 Officer pointed out one noticeable difference between the Medium-Term Financial Plan refresh in September and the one at the meeting, which was that the Combined Authority has shown recharges between the corporate staffing line and project budget line, meaning the whole cost of individual projects can be seen and it can be easier identifiable how grant funding is being spent.

As per the Combined Authority Constitution, the consultation will include Members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Business Board Members and Constituent Councils (Chief Executive Officers, Chief Finance Officers and Leaders). The Consultation will also be available online for the public to view and email feedback.

In response to a question on realistic timescale, with budget draft, consultation and elections in between, Deputy S73 Officer explained that the timescale is set out in the Constitution and the Combined Authority has to comply.

Cllr Murphy raised a concern about administration and management costs and asked for a pie chart to show what the Combined Authority is spending. The Deputy S73 Officer explained that the gross staffing costs were still shown in the corporate budgets, with the amounts recharged to specific projects shown on a separate line thus allowing the total staffing costs to be easily identified, monitored and controlled. Based on this Cllr Murphy withdrew his request.

Responding to a comment on the purpose of consulting Constituent Authorities, when the Combined Authority Board approves the Budget and it consists of the leaders of authorities, deputy S73 Officer explained that the Combined Authority was required to consult with anyone it might levy, therefore, Constituent Authorities were required to be asked.

#### **RESOLVED:**

That the Combined Authority Draft Budget and Medium-term Financial Plan be noted.

### **6. Affordable Housing Programme Update**

Director of Housing and Development provided a brief update on the progress of the Programme since the last update in June 2019, explaining the objective of £170m Affordable Housing Programme being the delivery of 2500 homes.

It was further noted that some good progress had been made in recent months. Homes with funding approved have increased from 777 to over 1100, money paid to date had gone from £3.5m to £28m. Looking ahead to the rest of this financial year, it is anticipated approximately 1230 units would be approved by the end of March with a significant jump in numbers of homes starting on-site.

Director of Housing and Development explained where the changes had happened and talked through updates with numerous developments and schemes, including Burwell scheme, Perkins site, Snowley Park, Belle Vue, Crowland Road and others.

It was also noted there had been some dropping in the prices of market housing since September 2018 due to the economic uncertainty.

Additionally, opportunities for the Combined Authority were presented, including looking at schemes that are stalled in the market, particularly some of the smaller schemes to explore options for a direct delivery. There might also be opportunities to support market houses.

Some identified risks included the need to continue to see the volume of schemes coming through to achieve the Combined Authority's target and the risk of planning applications not being approved.

In response to a question regarding the recently approved scheme at Wisbech Road, March and there being no mention of modification to the roundabout, the Director explained that the Combined authority was not determining planning, but that if planning permission was achieved, the Combined Authority would be happy to give a grant and support a scheme.

Regarding a question on modular construction, the Director explained that it had benefits such as good and consistent standards and speed, but they did need to be brought to site.

The life span of modular constructions was questioned, and the Director clarified that the industry was at the stage where all housing designs and materials are very comparable in terms of durability and the direction of travel seemed to be that there would be more and more modular construction.

Cllr Murphy raised a concern about standards and also about the low percentage of new homes and the conversion of offices into residential accommodation under permitted development. The Director reassured the Committee that building regulations were there for a reason and developers will have to comply with them. In response to the second part of the question, it was noted that there were very few schemes currently in the CPCA pipeline where offices were being converted to affordable units, but that doing that could help the market supply as well as being a quick project. The Director stressed that the Combined Authority needed to be dynamic, take opportunities when they presented themselves and that the market was always adapting.

Cllr Murphy further commented that with the funding the Combined Authority has, it should focus on providing new social homes rather than what seemed to be helping developers achieving profit.

In response to Cllr Scutt's concern about the term affordable and whether the Combined Authority required that affordable housing it was funding meet a particular standard, the Director explained there were three principal types of affordable housing tenure and that the Combined Authority supported all forms of tenure but that most of them at the moment were affordable rental units.

Cllr Dew wanted to commend anything that brings housing into use more quickly and noted that there was often a misconception that there was a skills shortage therefore we had modular houses. The Director confirmed that modular factories were very good at training people and one of the issues with traditional building was that the quality control could be inconsistent, hence modular technology is very progressive and faster.

To a concern raised about no mention of climate change when identifying risks, the Director explained that there was a national trend towards higher standards and that the Government identified particular issues around heating, gas boilers etc and the Combined Authority wished to be at the forefront of that, but that it was not just about building houses but also about what was coming ahead, including electric charging, and some schemes were already making provisions for that. Cllr Davey wondered whether there was a role for Overview & Scrutiny to include a reference, as part of Housing Development Programme to what Housing is doing to mitigate against climate change.

There were a number of recommendations raised for targets:

- the environment, sustainability and carbon neutrality,
- assessing shortage of accessible homes,
- impact on anti-poverty and fuel-poverty across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

There was also a request for a report to come back to the Committee on where the development company is and whether it is viable.

The Housing Team Programme Manager noted that there was already work in progress on housing needs and the update would be given in February 2020.

Cllr Dew noted some of the issues discussed had needed to be raised and that aspirations were good, but money was being given by the Government and the Combined Authority needed to deliver.

**RESOLVED:**

- a) That the update from the Director of Housing and Development be noted.
- b) That a more informed discussion is to be held at the February meeting, when more information will be available.

## **7. Review of Combined Authority Board Agenda**

The Committee reviewed the agenda for the Combined Authority Board meeting on Wednesday 27 November 2019 and identified questions to the Board as below:

### 3.3 Climate Change

Q: How will the Commission and its work align with the work of its constituent authorities and of Cambridgeshire County Council's technical group on air quality? We note that Cambridgeshire County Council publishes its pre-consultation Climate Change and Environment Strategy next month.

Q: How can the Commission effectively address the environmental effects of transport when the Local Transport Plan is going to the Combined Authority's Transport Committee in early January and will be approved by the Combined Authority Board at the end of January, given the importance of transport to climate change?

Q: How will the Commission influence the decision-making processes of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority?

Q: Whom will the Commission consult as part of its work?

Q: How will the Commission work with the Executive Committees of the Combined Authority?

Q: Will the Commission's interim report be made available before the pre-election period for the May elections?

Q: How soon does the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority expect the Panel to be recruited and hold its first meeting?

Q: Will the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority appoint a lead officer for Climate Change?

**RESOLVED:**

- a) That the CA Board agenda be noted.

- b) That the questions be submitted to the Combined Authority Board at its meeting on 27 November 2019.
- c) That all Constituent Councils be contacted in regards to their plans and strategies for climate change.

## **8. Combined Authority Forward Plan**

The Committee considered the Combined Authority Forward Plan.  
The Chair identified the following items for the Committee's consideration:

January - Local Transport Plan  
January – Skills Committee  
Business plan  
University of Peterborough  
Market Towns  
March – Local Enterprise Partnerships

### **RESOLVED:**

That the Combined Authority Forward Plan be noted.

## **9. Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme**

The Committee received the report which outlined the Work Programme for the Committee for the municipal year 2019/20.

Identified items to be added to the Work Programme for February meeting:

- i) Item on Housing
- ii) Item on Trading companies

### **RESOLVED:**

That the items be added to February agenda.

## **10. Date and Location of the next Committee meeting:**

The Committee agreed that the next meeting would be held on 16 December 2019 at 11:00am, at South Cambridgeshire District Council with a pre-meeting at 10am

The meeting concluded at 12.40pm.