



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

### **MINUTES**

**Date:** Friday, 24 April 2020

**Time:** 2.00 p.m.

**Location:** Virtual Meeting via the Zoom Platform

**Present:**

Cllr P Jordan	Huntingdonshire District Council
Cllr L Dupre (Chair)	East Cambridgeshire District Council
Cllr A Sharp	East Cambridgeshire District Council
Cllr M Gehring	Cambridge City Council
Cllr C McQueen	Cambridge City Council
Cllr A Coles	Peterborough City Council
Cllr E Murphy	Peterborough City Council
Cllr A Hay	Fenland District Council
Cllr A Miscandlon	Fenland District Council
Cllr J Scutt	Cambridgeshire County Council
Cllr G Chamberlain	South Cambridgeshire District Council
Cllr P Fane	South Cambridgeshire District Council

**Officers:**

Robert Parkin	Chief Legal and Monitoring Officer, Combined Authority
Susan Hall	Governance Assistant, Combined Authority
Domenico Cirillo	Business Programmes Manager, Combined Authority
Adrian Cannard	Strategic Planning Manager, Combined Authority
Anna Graham	Transport Programme Manager, Combined Authority
Rowland Potter	Transport Manager, Combined Authority
Robert Fox	Scrutiny Officer, Combined Authority (Minute taker)

#### **1. Apologies**

- 1.1 Apologies were received from: Cllr P Heylings (substituted by Cllr P Fane); and Cllr K Price (substituted by Cllr C McQueen).

The Chair welcomed Cllr McQueen to her first meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee; and all to the first virtual meeting of the Committee.



## **2. Declaration of Interests**

- 2.1 There were no declarations of interest

## **3. Minutes of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee Meeting of 24 February 2020**

- 3.1 The minutes of the meeting held on Monday, 24 February 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

## **4. Public Questions**

- 4.1 There were no public questions received.

## **5. The Mayor of the Combined Authority**

- 5.1 Mayor James Palmer was in attendance and paid tribute to the work undertaken by the Business Board during the pandemic. Mayor Palmer stated £5.9million of capital funding for the Combined Authority is reaching businesses directly; a further £500,000 for sole traders is also making a real difference; and this week a portal went online for people who have lost employment as a result of the pandemic. Lobbying for additional support from central government is also taking place.
- 5.2 A question was raised related to progress and the current status of the £100k homes project. Mayor Palmer responded that currently 532 are being built or are in the planning process, and it is anticipated the first residents will be housed by the end of the year. Mayor Palmer also informed the Committee that there have been many people signing up to be part of this scheme. In relation to modular homes Mayor Palmer reported he was unaware of any applications coming forward, but if they are a viable way of delivering homes developers should come forward. However, Mayor Palmer stated taxpayers should not be expected to fund them.
- 5.3 Following a question on bus services during the pandemic Mayor Palmer responded that services are operating at less than 50% capacity and a great deal of work has been done to support bus companies supplying school routes. It is vital, Mayor Palmer, stated that the smaller operators survive the outcome of the pandemic so that the Combined Authority area is not left with a single bus operator. There is work to be undertaken to find the right solution to funding post-pandemic as there is some concern about people wanting to use public transport once restrictions have been lifted.
- 5.4 A question on a press report of a proposed move of the CPCA offices from Alconbury in terms of transport links and decision-making was raised. Mayor Palmer cautioned against press and social media stories being taken as accurate, as the facts behind the story are less exciting as those published. Mayor Palmer explained the current accommodation is double the size needed for the number of staff, and that during the pandemic staff have shown the level of productivity is unaffected by office working. When the lease for the Alconbury site was signed there was a significantly larger staff base. Mayor Palmer also stated he would make savings wherever possible and by moving out of the Alconbury offices there would be a revenue saving of £0.75m over three years. If an appropriate site can be found in Ely the Combined Authority would consider this and it is also looking for a site, using capital funds, for a property close by a railway station. The site, however, could be anywhere within the Combined Authority area.



- 5.5 In response a further question was raised from the press report that the main reasons for vacating Alconbury is the transport links, and this in turn, undermines the County Council's move to Alconbury. It was also stated the Labour Group at both Cambridge City and Cambridgeshire County Councils are concerned by the impact on County Council staff travelling to Alconbury, and did not support the move of the County Council to Alconbury, and requested a commitment from Mayor Palmer that transport links to Alconbury will be implemented. Mayor Palmer confirmed the Combined Authority remains committed to delivering the CAM project to Alconbury and beyond and stated this commitment had previously been made public. A timeline for implementation of the transport links will be published in due course.

- 5.6 Councillor Gehring wished, as a Cambridge City Councillor, for it to be put on record his opposition to any move to Ely. Councillors Chamberlain and Hay wished it to be put on record they would support any decision which saved taxpayers' money.

- 5.7 The Chair asked Mayor Palmer about the decision process related to the proposed relocation and under what powers any decision will be made? Mayor Palmer responded the process commenced up to eight months ago when it became obvious the CPCA could operate in a smaller building. As yet, the right premises have not been found but savings can be made. The decision to sign-over the current lease at Alconbury will be a Mayoral one. There is agreement that this is the right thing to do. The Monitoring Officer confirmed a final decision will go before the Combined Authority Board as a matter of process. Any decision does not have to be made imminently as discussions are still ongoing with regard to signing-over the current lease. A clear and transparent decision trail was requested by the Chair, and other Committee members.

- 5.8 A further question was raised about home to school transport during the pandemic. In Peterborough there are more children than was expected still going into school, and it was asked whether innovation could play a part in the provision of school and key worker transport? Mayor Palmer responded that bus providers have suggested they would be available to work in offering more transport. However, as the numbers using public transport during the pandemic have fallen additional capacity is not needed. The Combined Authority is open to suggestions, however.

- 5.9 The Chair thanked Mayor Palmer for his contribution.

## **6. Business Board Chair**

- 6.1 Austen Adams, Chair of the Business Board and Domenico Cirillo, Business Programmes Manager were in attendance for this item. It was explained the Business Board had recently been subject to an annual review which focussed on the governance of the Board; strategy; and delivery and performance.
- 6.2 Delivery and performance was rated as requiring improvement. This, however, is a legacy of the dissolution of the former LEP – and the Business Board has advanced in the last six months.
- 6.3 The Board now has greater representation to meet diversity and equality requirements, which was identified in the governance review, and has seven new



members meaning it is now fully compliant. The assurance framework has been accepted by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS).

- 6.4 The strategy is now well constructed, and evidence based. During the last six months funding has been directed to the right priorities. Processes have been put in place to enable the Board and officers to make a fairer assessment of the projects which have been put forward for funding. All funding has now been allocated, however, there is a chance that further funding will become available as there is some recycled funding and this will be redirected. Representations have been made to BEIS to extend funding beyond March 2021.
- 6.5 Following a question, it was stated the level of risk associated with projects has increased as a result of the pandemic. Contingency plans are being put in place for any projects that might be at risk due to the situation and projects that did not quite 'make the cut' for funding would be re-looked at, if necessary. The Board is clear it would not want bureaucracy getting in the way of intervention if there is any shortfall due to the pandemic.
- 6.6 Following a question, it was agreed to share the BEIS report with members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee if BEIS approve this. The report would also be published on the Business Board website.
- 6.7 With regard to the pandemic response the challenge is getting the balance right with the large number of government initiatives in place to assist small businesses and SMEs and signposting them to the correct initiative to enable them to secure funding. The capability of the Business Board has been bolstered to enable officers to do this. The focus of the Board is on capitalising on the recovery post-pandemic as opportunities will remain to assist for the longer-term benefit of businesses. The Business Board is meeting informally on a fortnightly basis presently to keep the pandemic responses under review. The Board is looking at the growth service and redirecting to find help and support to accelerate the recovery post-pandemic. Sector strategies are reviewed and updated to better support businesses going forward in the recovery.
- 6.8 Following a question, it was confirmed that carbon neutrality is a consideration in all Business Board projects that come forward for investment.
- 6.9 Following a question, it was confirmed growth funds are not specifically targeted by sector or geography. There is a general call for projects which are then evaluated against criteria related to economics, job creation and other categories set by the Business Board. This does, inevitably, lead to outcomes where there are a number of projects in one locality, for example there are three projects based in Chatteris whereas other areas that might be expected to have good applications have very few forthcoming. There is also strength in applications from Peterborough rather than from Cambridge. The thrust of the Business Board is to deliver maximum economic development for the Combined Authority area.
- 6.10 A question was raised in relation to businesses in Cambridge which are struggling and being refused government grants and whether the Business Board would consider changing some of its criteria for funding to prevent businesses going under. In response it was stated thresholds have been lowered and that any businesses that do not receive funding get good feedback which might enable them to succeed with bids in the second-round of funding. Officers do assist



businesses to get their bids in to a good standard and signpost them to other sources of support. Additionally, local authorities are supported to make contact with hard-to-reach businesses and there is a weekly Coronavirus message to support local authorities, the Federation of Small Businesses, Chambers of Commerce to reach out to as many businesses as possible.

- 6.11 The Chair thanked Austen Adams for his contribution to the meeting and confirmed an invitation would be extended to attend future meetings of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee to provide further updates on the Business Board

## **7. Market Town Masterplans**

- 7.1 Domenico Cirillo, Business Programmes Manager, was in attendance and stated the papers circulated for the meeting focused on the consultation undertaken as part of the Huntingdonshire Market Town Masterplans in response to a request at the last meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.
- 7.2 It was reported that there had been delays in the consultations due to the purdah period caused by the General Election in December 2019.
- 7.3 In relation to the East Cambridgeshire Market Towns the Chair asked whether there is intention to delay the Masterplan as a result of the pandemic. In response it was stated the intention is still to take the Masterplan to the June CAB as the project has reached a point where it can comfortably identify headline interventions. There is a commitment to get the Market Town Masterplans delivered. The Chair expressed her surprise that the intention is to go to the June CAB as she had not been approached as a member of the District Council in terms of consultation. The Chair stated any consultation will be restricted if the plans go to the June CAB meeting.
- 7.4 It was explained that consultation in East Cambridgeshire is currently being set out and being agreed with the District Council and details will be notified. Work has taken place in Ely, Littleport and Soham and background data is being used that was not included in the consultations elsewhere in the county.
- 7.5 There was some disquiet expressed from Members around the consultations in Fenland and East Cambridgeshire.
- 7.6 The Chair thanked Domenico Cirillo for his contribution to the meeting for the last two items.

## **8. Independent Chair of the Commission on Climate Change**

- 8.1 Adrian Cannard, Strategic Planning Manager was in attendance and updated the Committee on the establishment of an independent Commission on Climate Change. The responsibility for the appointment of the Chair for the Commission was delegated to the Chief Executive of the Combined Authority. The appointment process is still ongoing with conversations taking place and an announcement of a Chair should be made shortly. There is technical work ongoing to enable full support for the Commission once formally established.
- 8.2 Realistic expectations for an interim report (originally due in Spring 2020) will be one of the first things on the Commission's agenda; with a final report likely to be filed in early 2021.





- 8.3 Following a question it was stated that it is difficult to establish a precise timetable for the appointment of a Chair of the Commission as it will depend on the availability of any potential candidate. The commitment is this will be as soon as is practicable with discussions ongoing. The hiatus, as a result of the pandemic, has been an added complication it was explained.
- 8.4 With regard to any potential candidates for the Commission itself it was stated, following a question, that it would be unfair to mention in a public forum who they are, but that there is a list that would be discussed with the Chair once they are appointed. It is intended, in principle, that diversity requirements will be taken into account when appointing the Commission
- 8.5 It was confirmed that officers will feed the environmental angles related to reaching carbon neutrality by 2050 into Business Board decisions.
- 8.6 The Chair stated a number of the constituent authorities in the Combined Authority area are waiting on the work of the Commission to inform them regarding work they are undertaking. The delay in appointment is having a negative effect on the work these authorities can do and revisions are having to be made. The Chair requested, that once the Chair of the Commission is appointed, and has viable strategic and operational ideas they attend the first practicable meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

## **9. Wisbech Rail Project**

- 9.1 Anna Graham, Transport Programmes Manager and Rowland Potter, Head of Transport were in attendance for this item and explained a Final Business Case for restoring the rail link between Cambridge and Wisbech is due to be complete in June 2020. The intention is to have direct services to Cambridge from Wisbech, however, the first stage is to reopen the Wisbech to March line and interchange at March station. However, there is infrastructure work being conducted by Network Rail in Ely that currently impinges on this. Liaison work with Network Rail is being conducted to ensure there is a connection between March and Wisbech before both the Ely expansion work and the Wisbech rail link to Cambridge are completed.
- 9.2 The Wisbech Rail Project will create opportunity for economic benefit throughout the Combined Authority area and will assist in the development of housing in Wisbech. The project is trying to attract inward investment to create connectivity between the north and south of Cambridgeshire and the Final Business Case will reflect this. The Chair stated the impression from the project documents is that the project is about getting people from Wisbech to jobs in the Cambridge economy, rather than vice versa; and enabling the economy of the north of the county to grow in its own right (referencing the CPIER report about the 'three economies' of the Combined Authority area). Anna Graham undertook to take that back and feed into the Final Business Case.
- 9.3 A question was raised with regard to fares and whether any thought had been given to how these might be set, and whether The Mayor might pursue fare structures with central government? In response it was stated such structures would be considered at a future point in the project.



- 9.4 The Chair thanked the officers for their contribution and stated a further update to the Committee would be sought following the presentation of the Final Business Case.

## **10. Annual Report of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee 2019/20**

- 10.1 The Scrutiny Officer introduced the report which the Committee endorsed to present to the Combined Authority Board. In the absence of the Chair of the CAM Metro Task and Finish Group Councillor Scutt requested an extension to the work of the Group with a final report to be presented to the May meeting of the Committee. This was agreed.
- 10.2
- 10.3 The recommendations of the Bus review Task and Finish Group were agreed, with the request to continue its work until the Final Business Case in January 2020 noted and it was agreed to refer to the next meeting of the Committee.
- 10.4 The Chair thanked Councillor Price and Councillor Hay as Chairs of the CAM Metro and Bus review Task and Finish Groups respectively as well as all Members who had contributed to the reviews.

## **11. Combined Authority Board Agenda**

- 11.1 The Committee agreed the following as questions the Chair should put the Combined Authority Board at its meeting on Wednesday, 29 April:
- When and how does the Combined Authority intend to publish the results of the recent public consultation on the CAM Metro, and how does it intend to use the response to guide its future work on this scheme?
  - The Overview & Scrutiny Committee is concerned by the delay in the appointment of a Chairman of the Independent Commission on Climate Change. Can the Overview & Scrutiny Committee have a statement on the progress on an appointment, and on the progress of work in this area, and when the Committee might expect some engagement with the Chairman once appointed?
  - What have been the additional set-up costs of the Angle Holdings traded companies as it is stated that some of these costs would have been incurred in any case?
  - The answer provided to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee in March on the plans by Homes England to proactively fund accessible homes and homes that tackle climate change indicated an allocation of £125 million of government monies is being made available through the Care and Support Specialised Housing Fund. The Overview & Scrutiny Committee recognises this will be used to develop new affordable homes, which meet the needs of older people and disabled adults. The Overview & Scrutiny Committee has heard that, to date, just one disabled family has been assisted in the Combined Authority area. Can the Board assure the Overview & Scrutiny Committee that the Combined Authority will be doing all it possibly can to improve the accessibility of new homes and to achieve homes that meet the 2050 carbon-neutral target?



- The Overview & Scrutiny Committee has expressed some reservation around the transparency of the process to date regarding the Combined Authority headquarters move to Ely. Can the Committee, therefore, be supplied with details of the process, both to date and moving forward, and when the Board is expected to be asked to make a decision regarding the lease at Alconbury and any new lease to be entered into?

## **12. Combined Authority Forward Plan**

- 12.1 The Forward Plan was noted, and it was agreed the new Committee from May 2020 should make comment on it.

## **13. Overview & Scrutiny Committee Work Programme**

- 13.1 The Work Programme was noted, and it was agreed the new Committee from May 2020 should make comment on it. A horizon scanning item related to the work programme will be on the agenda at the next meeting.

## **14. Committee Meetings: Lead Member Questions**

- 14.1 The Lead Members confirmed the questions they would be putting to each of the Executive Committees.

## **15. Date and Time of Next Meeting**

- 15.1 Potential dates and times for the next meeting will be circulated to the existing Committee membership by the Scrutiny Officer.

The meeting closed at 16:50