



**CAMBRIDGESHIRE  
& PETERBOROUGH**  
COMBINED AUTHORITY

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

## **DRAFT MINUTES**

**Date: Monday, 28 March 2022**

**Time: 11:00**

**Location: Sand Martin House, Peterborough**

### **Members:**

Cllr S Corney	Huntingdonshire District Council
Cllr L Dupre (Chair)	East Cambridgeshire District Council
Cllr A Sharp	East Cambridgeshire District Council
Cllr D Baigent	Cambridge City Council
Cllr M Davey	Cambridge City Council
Cllr M Atkins	Cambridgeshire County Council
Cllr A Coles	Peterborough City Council
Cllr A Iqbal	Peterborough City Council
Cllr A Miscandlon	Fenland District Council
Cllr A Hay	Fenland District Council
Cllr J Rippeth	South Cambridgeshire District Council
Cllr A Van de Weyer	South Cambridgeshire District Council

### **In Attendance:**

Cllr B Smith	Leader - South Cambridgeshire District Council Lead Board Member for the Environment and Climate Change
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### **Officers:**

Rochelle Tapping	Deputy Monitoring Officer, Combined Authority
Anne Gardiner	Governance Manager (Statutory Scrutiny Officer) Combined Authority
Joanna Morley	Interim Governance Officer, Combined Authority
Nick Sweeney	Residential Development Manager, Combined Authority (remote attendance)
Adrian Cannard	Strategic Planning Manager (remote attendance)

## **1. Apologies**

1.1 Apologies were received from Councillor Dew and Councillor Goldsack.

## **2. Minutes**

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on the 24 January 2022 were approved as a correct record.

## **3. Declaration of Interests**

- 3.1 No declarations of interests were made.

## **4. Public Questions**

- 4.1 No public questions were received.

## **5. Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report and CfGS Review Feedback**

- 5.1 Councillor Dupre, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee introduced the report the purpose of which was to present the Annual Scrutiny Report to the Committee for review before its submission to the Combined Authority Board.
- 5.2 The Committee had no further comments.

### **RESOLVED:**

That the Committee approve the draft Annual Report of the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee for 2021/22 and that it be submitted to the CA Board at their Annual General Meeting being held on 8 June.

## **6. CPCA Climate Change Plans**

- 6.1 The Committee received the report from Councillor Michael Atkins, the Overview and Scrutiny Lead Member for Climate Change and Environment. The report had been written to accompany the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Climate Action Plan 2022-2025 and was intended to provide a summary for members, highlighting key areas of risk or challenge that the Committee might wish to consider.
- 6.2 Councillor Bridget Smith, Lead Board Member for the Environment and Climate Change then addressed the Committee emphasising that the challenges of climate change needed to be the overarching priority of everything that the Combined Authority (CA) did but that more work was yet to be done in embedding this approach into the work of the CA. Cllr Smith welcomed the Action Plan, but felt there needed to be careful consideration of where to go next, following on from the pilot schemes, and hoped that Overview and Scrutiny would play a pivotal role in monitoring the work of the CA in meeting the targets set for reduction in carbon emissions.
- 6.3 During the discussion that followed, the following points were noted:-

- 6.4 In response to a question on whether retro fitting homes, and transport should be the two priorities of the CA, and whether the Government should be asked for more money to support these two strands, Cllr Smith stated that that the CA needed to first identify and collate all the work being done by the different constituent authorities so that best practice could be shared, before asking the Government for specific monies.
- 6.5 Members asked about how the CA, as a predominantly rural area, could work with farmers to combat climate change and were informed that there had been initial engagement with the National Farmers Union (NFU) and that John Shropshire, who represented farming interests, was a member of the Climate Working Group whose work had fed into the Action Plan.
- 6.6 Cllr Smith spoke of the need to have a proper strategy moving forward to build on the pilot schemes that had been outlined in the current Action Plan. These pilots were slightly new territory for the CA and were a good starting point but it was imperative that other partners were brought in to help fund and resource these schemes. It was highlighted that the schemes to be funded should be those that had the maximum impact geographically, for example the Waterbeach Solar Farm which would be used to charge refuse collecting vehicles from South Cambridgeshire District Council as well as Cambridgeshire County Council. Scrutiny could also help to capitalise on the pilot schemes and help shape how things should be taken forward.
- 6.7 Adrian Cannard, Strategic Planning Manager, commented that one of the benefits of running the pilot work was to help build local capacity for identifying and developing projects and then to demonstrate that best practice to other areas. This put the schemes in a good position for future funding opportunities not just from the CA's own budget but from Government too as there were a number of funding streams coming through such as the Sustainable Warmth Programme for retrofits. The other benefit was to help take forward the Green finance initiative and show how they could be in a position to help the private sector invest in green activities in the area.
- 6.8 Information on the Climate Change work was up to date on the website and the district councils helped to cascade information down to parish and town councils. The CA had been working very closely with those towns that were getting funding for their regeneration projects. Adrian Cannard informed Members that one of the budget lines was to run a net zero project with local communities which would provide an opportunity to engage directly with town and parish councils and encourage projects to come forward from the parish level.
- 6.9 Current funds from central Government to deliver on the carbon targets set seemed woefully inadequate and it was therefore queried whether a better strategy, to capitalise on limited funds, would be for the region to grow its own 'green' skills, particularly in manufacture. In response, Cllr Smith commented that the Business Board were very involved in developing the skills that the area needed and that the new university at Peterborough would help in this regard.
- 6.10 The money for the capital purchase of 30 electric buses had come from a government grant. Cllr Smith had wanted to apply for monies to cover 150 buses but was advised that it was better to be more modest in applying for such grants in order to guarantee funding. However, by demonstrating that the 30 buses had been hugely successful and were widely used then it would strengthen the argument when applying for additional monies the second time around.

- 6.11 Significant additional funding was being sought for the Decarbonisation fund from both the Government, and the private sector who were seeking investments in the green sector. The deadline date of June 2023 allowed for sufficient time to set this up.
- 6.12 In terms of the Local Area Energy Plans (LAEPs), a significant amount of modelling work had been done by the UK Power Network as the energy distributor, but officers had also wanted to build in some of the learning from the Peterborough project so had given a realistic deadline of March 2024, with hopes that it could be delivered before that date.
- 6.13 The Warmer Homes Scheme was the latest iteration of the Government's grant funding and local authorities had successfully bid to draw down the monies. The full details were not yet known but this version of the grant was focussed on low-income homes and raising their energy standards, with insulation being a major component of this. Work on this was being led by a partnership of the local authorities in the area and further details on this scheme would be sent to committee members post the meeting.
- 6.14 The Chair expressed concern that £22m of unspent money of the Green Homes Grant would have to be handed back. Going forward every available grant and monies would need to be utilised in order to insulate to meet the very ambitious net zero targets set by the Government and the constituent councils. In order to drive a public and accountable discussion on this matter Scrutiny would look to schedule a further agenda item with the Energy Hub at their meeting in June.
- 6.15 The cost-of-living crisis would be a real driver for the CA and would focus on interventions that enabled people to use less energy, whatever the source.
- 6.16 In response to a question on what was being done to encourage the building trade to build houses that were Carbon Zero, Cllr Smith felt that this was a question better directed to Government as local Councils were hampered by Government legislation on house building. It was a great frustration to many that the Government had set such ambitious targets but yet were not forcing developers to build to higher standards of energy efficiency. South Cambridgeshire was however leading by example and had funded its own project to build 200 carbon zero houses.
- 6.17 Cllr Corney spoke from his experience as a developer and informed the Committee that there were a set of Government guidelines that builders had to follow; for example, from next year builders would not be allowed to put in any new gas connections. In terms of solar panels, it was very complicated to install them at source and then transfer them over to new buyers.
- 6.18 The Chair referred to para 4.7 of Cllr Atkin's report and asked whether it would be better for the CA to abandon its all-encompassing approach and instead focus on achieving a few key things; delegating other matters up to Government or out to the constituent Councils and partnerships. The Chair also asked for Cllr Smith's view on what she saw was the role of the CA given the absence of an initial mandate in the devolution deal and also that much of the required expertise lay outside of the Combined Authority. Cllr Smith stated that the brief of the Commission had been to look at responsibilities across the whole of the area and that these had been included in the Action Plan. Responding to the levels of expertise within the CA, Cllr Smith highlighted that there was a monthly meeting

of senior climate change officers which meant that expertise and best practice could be shared across the CA area. In addition it was also intended that the CA would 'resource up' and add extra resilience to the two excellent officers already working in this area for the CA. The Action Plan outlined the actions that needed to be taken at all levels and stressed a collaborative approach with the CA keeping a watching brief across all sectors, and holding partners and other bodies to account.

6.19 The Strategic Planning Manager confirmed that officers would map the Action Plan against the original 58 recommendations, and this would be taken back to the Climate Action Group, and the Independent Climate Commission in order to discuss their role in monitoring their recommendations. Councillor Atkins felt that this document would also be useful for Scrutiny to aid in their own monitoring of the Plan.

6.20 The final issue to be touched on was that of the Peatlands in the CA region and its impact on the Climate. The Government recently changed its national emissions reporting to include emissions from agricultural use. This meant that given the large extent of peat and wasteland peat that was farmed in the region there had been a very significant increase in the emissions recorded for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Assumptions on the nature of our soil had been based on information last updated in the 1980s and so in order to have a better understanding of emissions and be able to influence the Lowlands Peat Task Force, a number of climate stations had been funded and Fenland Soil had been commissioned to undertake some additional monitoring.

6.21 In his summing up, Cllr Atkins emphasised how hugely affected the CA region would be by global warming with the predicted rises in summer temperatures, reduction in rainfall, and increased risk of flooding. The area both contributed to the issue (in terms of emissions being 25% higher per person than the national average) and would suffer from them, and this therefore presented a real opportunity for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to lead the way nationally in tackling climate change.

6.22 RESOLVED:

That:

- a) The Report and the Climate Action Plan be noted.
- b) The Energy Hub be invited to a meeting in June to have further discussion about insulation and the retrofitting of homes
- c) A further report on the Action Plan be scheduled for the September meeting of the Committee and that the Independent Climate Commission be invited to attend.

6.23 ACTIONS:

1. The Strategic Planning Manager to provide the Committee with further information on the Warmer Homes Scheme.
2. The Committee be provided with further information on the progress made against the Action Plan and its alignment with the original 58 recommendations, once the mapping of this process has been completed.

## **7. Accommodation Strategy Update**

- 7.1 The Committee received a verbal update from Nick Sweeney, the Residential Development Manager, who advised the Committee that following a shortlisting of the Peterborough and Huntingdon sites as potential locations for the office accommodation for the Combined Authority, a recommendation of Pathfinder House in Huntingdon as the preferred option would be put to the Board at their meeting on Wednesday.
- 7.2 On balance Pathfinder House was considered the most competitive option for the following reasons:
- Based on floor area, overall costs were less
  - Its central location was considered the most convenient for most regular users of the office
  - There was the ability to sub-let the building which could provide future cost benefits.
  - The use of public meeting facilities, including the civic suite at Pathfinder House, could be shared which would save the CA having to provide expensive duplicate facilities that would not be in constant use
- 7.3 Both options offered considerable savings when compared to the costs of the former office at Alconbury and there was sufficient capital to meet the costs of the move and to provide a comfortable and practical office layout.
- 7.4 In response to a question about the continued use of the satellite office at Ely, the Residential Development Manager highlighted that there was still a requirement to have a registered office and that the Ely site fulfilled that purpose and would continue to do so until the head office was secured. The future of the Ely office was uncertain but as there was a contractual arrangement in place until the end of the year there was time to consider this further.

## **8. One CAM Closure Update**

- 8.1 The Committee received a verbal update on the One CAM closure from Councillor Davey who had met with officers to discuss the process of the One CAM closure, including the finances pre and post May of last year when the decision had been taken, and what would happen next.
- 8.2 The Board had met in December of last year and agreed to prepare audited accounts. There were still however some outstanding measures that required sign off so rather than go through part steps, Cllr Davey felt that it would be better to address the Committee after May with all measures completed and a fuller picture of the financial implications.

## **9. Combined Authority Forward Plan**

- 9.1 The Chair invited the Lead members to provide any updates.
- 9.2 Cllr Baigent as Lead Member for Transport advised that he had picked up on the point made at the last meeting relating to e-scooters and bikes, and a seminar, which he would chair, would be set up as soon as possible after the upcoming

elections. The seminar would consider the regulation of this form of transport and look for any opportunities that their use could present.

9.3 Cllr Coles and Cllr Miscandlon as the Lead Members for Skills advised that they had spoken to the new CPCA skills officer to discuss ways of working and taking matters forward.

9.4 Cllr Van De Weyer as the Lead Member for Housing advised that he had met with the Director of Housing and raised the issue of the Loans Programme. The programme was being closely monitored by the Housing Committee which would enable any risks or problems to be identified as soon as possible. Cllr Van De Weyer further advised that in June, the Board would consider the future of the CA housing purpose and function and that the consultation on this matter was currently underway. He suggested that this also be considered by scrutiny after the Board meeting in June.

9.5 Cllr Atkins as Lead Member for Climate Change advised that he had nothing further to report following the earlier discussion at item 6.

9.6 The Committee noted the Forward Plan.

## **10. Combined Authority Board Agenda**

10.1 No questions were put forward to be asked at the CA Board this month.

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

11.1 The Committee received the report which requested that members discuss and agree items for the work programme.

11.2 The following items were suggested for the work programme for the next municipal year:

- The Energy Hub be invited to a meeting in June to have further discussion about insulation and the retrofitting of homes
- A further report on the Climate Action Plan be scheduled for the September meeting of the Committee and that the Independent Climate Commission be invited to attend.
- The future of the CA Housing Purpose and Function
- The Skills agenda

11.3 Cllr Coles and Cllr Miscandlon asked the Committee to approve the scoping document for the review of the provision of community learning across the CPCA area.

11.4 Cllr Atkins asked Cllr Coles to define what was meant by Community Learning in this context. Cllr Coles responded that one of the lines of enquiry of the review would be to understand the sector's view of what constituted community learning and whether that differed from the view of the CPCA.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee approve the scoping document for the review of the provision of community learning across the CPCA area.

**12. Date of next meeting**

- 12.1 It was agreed by the Committee that the provisional date set in April was not required and that therefore the next meeting would be the first of the new municipal year and was scheduled for Monday 13 June.

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As this was the last meeting of the municipal year and possibly for some of the Committee, Cllr Davey, on behalf of the members, took the opportunity to thank Cllr Dupre for all her hard work in chairing the Committee and directing their work. In reply, the Chair thanked the Committee for all their contributions over the past year.

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Meeting Closed: 12:29pm.