



**CAMBRIDGESHIRE
& PETERBOROUGH**
COMBINED AUTHORITY

Agenda Item No:1.8

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Arrangements: Review of Recommendations from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny

To: Combined Authority Board

Meeting Date: 29th September 2021

Public report: Public Report

Lead Member: Cllr Dupre – Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee

From: Robert Parkin

Recommendations: The Combined Authority Board is recommended to:

a) Note the recommendations from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny and provide any comments or feedback to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Voting arrangements: A simple majority of all Members present and voting.

To be carried, the vote must include the vote of the Mayor, or the Deputy Mayor when acting in place of the Mayor.

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To provide the Combined Authority Board with the recommendations and action plan from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny following their review of the CPCA Overview and Scrutiny arrangements.

2. Background

- 2.1 At the start of the year the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny published their second edition on guidance to overview and scrutiny in Combined Authorities. This second edition reflects upon the past three years of practice since the introduction of CA's. It provides guidance around how scrutiny can best operate in practice. The guidance may be found here: [Revised guidance: Overview and Scrutiny in Combined Authorities - Centre For Governance and Scrutiny](https://www.cfgs.org.uk/revised-guidance-overview-and-scrutiny-in-combined-authorities) (cfgs.org.uk)
- 2.2 Following this guidance being published the CPCA Overview and Scrutiny Committee held an informal workshop with CfGS to discuss some of the points raised within the guidance and requested that a proposal be brought forward from CfGS to carry out a review of the current scrutiny arrangements at the CPCA.
- 2.3 The CA Board approved that request and a review was carried out over March and April.
- 2.4 The findings from the review were presented to the O&S Committee at their meeting held on the 28th June and the recommendations were accepted and officers instructed to work with CfGS to create an implementation plan and start work on the actions. The findings report and actions are attached at Appendix 1.

Summary of Findings

- In common with the situation in other combined authorities, the combined authority has struggled to find a role for scrutiny. The impact of recent scrutiny work has been limited;
- Scrutiny's focus on the detailed operational oversight of Mayoral decision-making is not the best use of councillors' time and efforts – a new and unique focus for the function is required. This must not however be at the expense of a continued, strong role for the function in holding the Mayor to account;
- The organisation is committed to making the function relevant and effective, and the election of a new Mayor provides an excellent opportunity to recast the function's role and its relationship to the wider authority
- Scrutiny councillors themselves recognise some of the shortcomings of current ways of working. As in other combined authorities, the bringing together of councillors from across the CA's constituent authorities has made it difficult to pursue a "team" approach to scrutiny despite the efforts of the current chair.

- Councillors have a strong sense of what good scrutiny would look like – and the kinds of issues that they should be examining – but it has proven challenging to convert this aspiration into reality.

Key Actions

1) The report from the CfGS found that Scrutiny’s focus on the detailed operational oversight of Mayoral decision-making was not the best use of councillors’ time and efforts – a new and unique focus for the function is required and therefore the Committee will move away from the shadowing of the CA Board agenda at each meeting and have a more focused work programme that is well informed by an understanding of the new Mayor’s priorities and where opportunities to influence action on those priorities might exist. The Committee have agreed to review this from December 2021.

2) The report from CfGS recommends a new approach to the sharing of information with scrutiny members which involves an end to the regular sharing, and scrutiny of, Mayoral decisions at committee, with information being shared on an ongoing basis outside of committee to inform the appropriate escalation of issues to committee based on need; to this end an Information Sharing Protocol and information digest to be developed to ensure committee receive information in a timely accessible format to help inform their work.

3) The report from CfGS recommends the programming of a regular and general Mayor’s Question Time to allow high profile, direct holding to account of the Mayor to continue; the findings also suggest that the scrutiny of CA Board members might also follow this model. The introduction of a Mayor’s Question Time has been scheduled for November following approval of the format by the O&S Committee.

4) Work with constituent councils to ensure support for members appointed to O&S is appropriate and a scrutiny protocol to be developed setting out mutual expectations for scrutiny members – including around information access, support arrangements and requirements around commitments.

5) The review highlighted that Scrutiny members are keen to engage more productively with SPVs and with the work of the Business Board with efforts having been made on both by officers and members which should be built upon.

2.5 The first action within the report from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny states that following an informal session with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to explore a renewed and explicit focus for their work (held on the 12th July 2021) that the Mayor, CA Board members and Senior officers be engaged to allow an opportunity for them to contribute to the recasting of the committee’s function.

2.6 The Chair and Vice Chair for Overview and Scrutiny have met with the Mayor to discuss the Mayor’s priorities and the format for a Mayor’s Question Time; at this meeting the Mayor confirmed that he is committed to acting in a collaborative way and was willing to attend any meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee when requested in his role as the Mayor and also the Chair of the Transport and Infrastructure Committee.

2.7 The Chair, Vice Chair and the Mayor also have discussed that members of CA Board will also be invited to attend the Committee when requested in their lead member roles for the Combined Authority.

2.8 The Board are asked to consider the reports from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny and provide any feedback on the recommendations they wish the O&S Committee to consider.

3. Financial Implications

3.1 None

4. Legal Implications

4.1 The Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016: "SCHEDULE 5A COMBINED AUTHORITIES: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES AND AUDIT COMMITTEES states that to the discharge of any functions includes a reference to the doing of anything which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of those functions.

6. Appendices

6.1 Appendix 1 – Centre for Governance and Scrutiny Recommendations and Actions

6.2 Appendix 2 – Centre for Governance and Scrutiny – Action Plan

7. Background Papers

7.1 [Review of Overview and Scrutiny Arrangements – CA Board report 24th March 2021](#)

7.2 [Review of O&S Arrangements – Centre for Governance and Scrutiny Proposal – 22nd March 2021](#)

7.3 [Review of O&S Arrangements – O&S Committee 28th June 2021](#)

7.4 [Review of O&S Arrangements – O&S Committee 26th July 2021](#)