

Local Assurance Framework Annual Review

To:	Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Board
Meeting Date:	29 September 2021
Public report:	Yes
Lead Member:	Mayor Nik Johnson
From:	Jon Alsop, Chief Finance Officer and Robert Parkin, Monitoring Officer
Key decision:	No
Forward Plan ref:	n/a
Recommendations:	The Combined Authority Board is recommended to: Approve the revised Assurance Framework.
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 The Board is asked to approve the revised Assurance Framework (AF) attached at Appendix 1. This is the final draft of the AF, the previous version of which was reviewed at the March Board meeting. This draft includes some minor changes to the previously presented version as required by Government, along with other minor amendments to correct inaccuracies and cosmetic changes.

2. Background

- 2.1 The requirement to develop a local AF and agree it with Government, is one of the key differences between the Combined Authority and traditional local authorities. It sets out how the Combined Authority will appraise, monitor and evaluate schemes to ensure that we achieve value for money with our funding – this is the lynchpin of devolution in England that provides Government with the assurances required to entrust devolved funding to Combined Authorities and to use the funding appropriately.
- 2.2 The revised AF was considered at the Audit and Governance Committee meeting on 5 March 2021. Following discussion, the Committee decided by a majority to recommend the draft AF to the Combined Authority Board for approval.
- 2.3 The draft AF was also considered at an extraordinary meeting of the Business Board on 4 March 2021 where again it was decided unanimously to recommend the revised draft to the Combined Authority for approval.
- 2.4 The March CA Board approved the draft presented to them however, as approval is required from the Ministry for Health, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) before a Combined Authority can publish a revised AF, the Board delegated authority to the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Mayor, to make further amendments as required by Government and to adopt the amended AF.
- 2.5 The amendments required by MHCLG have subsequently been made to the version of the AF at Appendix 1 and the revised AF could have been published utilising the delegation from the March Board; however, as the AF represents such an essential part of the operation of the Combined Authority and there has been a change to the membership of the Board since March, the Mayor has requested that the revised AF be brought back for approval by the Board.
- 2.6 This gives the Board another chance to reflect on the processes that the Combined Authority will put in place to ensure public funds are spent properly, and how the policy framework the Combined Authority are in the process of renewing fit into the decisions the Board make.

3. Changes to the policy framework

- 3.1 With the changes to the leadership of both the Combined Authority and several of its constituent councils comes a change to the strategic objectives and priorities of the organisation as a whole.
- 3.2 While this could cause concern that an AF developed before this change would not be

appropriate for the new Combined Authority, the Board can take assurance on this point from two areas: Primarily that the AF, much like the constitution, is focused on processes and principles – it is not a policy document. Secondly, the document is reviewed and revised every year and most changes can be agreed without the need for Departmental review and approval as was required for this revision, so if there are further changes to be made these can be picked up as part of the annual cycle.

- 3.3 While the AF is not a policy document, it does set out how investment decisions will be made, and that all such decisions should be based on an assessment of a project's fit with the strategic objectives of the organisation - enshrined in the policies and strategies approved by the Board. This requires that the AF refer to the policies and strategies that have been put in place but only at a very high-level summary e.g. if the Board approve a revised Local Transport Plan (LTP) there would be no need to revise the AF as it simply says that the Board will assess transport projects for strategic fit against the LTP – the principal does not change even though the assessment criteria defined by the LTP may.

4. Next Steps

- 4.1 As the revised AF changes the principles on which business cases are developed and assessed, once adopted, there will need to be a review of the processes surrounding bringing forward projects requesting funding from the Combined Authority.
- 4.2 The National Local Growth Assurance Framework for Mayoral Combined Authorities was updated earlier this month. The CPCA Assurance Framework will be reviewed and updated in light of the updated guidance.

5. Appendices

- 5.1 Appendix 1: Revised Assurance Framework (clean copy)
- 5.2 Appendix 2: Revised Assurance Framework (with tracked changes)
- 5.3 Accessible versions of the appendices are available on request from Democratic.Services@cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk

6. Background Papers

- 6.1 [Audit and Governance Committee 5 March 2021- Item 4 refers](#)
- 6.2 The report and appendices to the Extraordinary meeting of the Business Board can be viewed via the following link: [Extraordinary meeting of the Business Board 4 March 2021 - Item 2 refers](#)
- 6.3 The report and appendices to the Overview and Scrutiny meeting can be viewed via the following link: [Overview and Scrutiny Committee 22 February 2021 - Item 8 refers](#)
- 6.4 The report and appendices to the Combined Authority Board meeting can be viewed via the following link: [Combined Authority Board 24th March 2021 – item 1.7 refers](#)