



## Overview & Scrutiny Committee (OSC)

19 June 2023

Briefing Paper

Title: **Delivering Overview & Scrutiny Function**

### Context

The OSC is scheduled to discuss and agree how it intends to deliver the Overview & Scrutiny function at its meeting on the 19 June 2023.

This follows consideration of options for delivering scrutiny in an improvement framework context at the OSC that took place in March 2023. The outcome of the March OSC was a request for a more informed information pack to be shared with OSC membership in support of a workshop discussion to support the OSC in determining how best to deliver the function as part of the Combined Authority's overall approach to improvement.

The requested information pack was sent out to all OSC membership on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2023 and can be accessed via this link: [Information Pack - OSC](#)

The information pack takes into account:

- ☐ Feedback from OSC
- ☐ 2022 Review of Governance
- ☐ Feedback from CPCA Improvement Plan Phase 1
- ☐ Engagement with other Mayoral Combined Authorities and the Centre for Governance & Scrutiny

### Scrutiny Workshop – 13 June

The workshop considered:

- ☐ Next phase of the Improvement Framework at CPCA
- ☐ New CPCA Governance Arrangements
- ☐ Scrutiny in a Combined Authority context
- ☐ Core roles for scrutiny and emerging information and tools to assist undertaking of these core roles
- ☐ Options for delivering the scrutiny function

The discussion was positive with Members present raising the following issues to be noted and/or addressed in general support of the proposed option (Option A):

**Capacity** – the capacity of Members must be noted when considering all available options for delivering the scrutiny function, it was important therefore that the Combined Authority sought to make the best use of Members' availability and capacity. Noting that the proposed scheduled informal OSC meeting in Option A would not need to meet quoracy requirements, it would still need to be effectively supported to make best use of Member capacity and to best inform and focus activity at formal OSCs. The informal meeting would need to be provided with required focused information (as opposed to data) on corporate performance, major project performance, and a long-term view of planned decision-making through the forward plan and be guided through that information by officers.



**Information** – access to information and the use of new tools was key to ensuring the OSC was informed and enabled in undertaking core scrutiny roles. An Access to Information Protocol would be required that built upon existing access rights of the OSC through legislation with a commitment to how the CA would enable delivery of Overview & Scrutiny through the provision of information. The Protocol would act in a similar fashion to a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) or service level agreement between the OSC and the governance framework of the Combined Authority.

**Officer Support** – Proactive and effective officer input would be required to support the OSC moving forward if it was going to be able to effectively deliver the identified core scrutiny roles set out in the information pack.

**Early OSC Involvement** – there was an agreement that early involvement of the OSC would support delivery of the core scrutiny roles set out regarding policy development and pre-decision scrutiny. To ensure delivery of this the Forward Plan must include a longer look ahead for Combined Authority decision-making, which will be supported by Directorate Business Plans within the Combined Authority setting out annual activity.

**CPCA Improvement** – there was agreement that scrutiny should continue to play a key role in the Combined Authority improvement journey. The Improvement Highlight Report should be a key performance document presented to OSC as part of its performance challenge and accountability role.

## **Proposal**

At the OSC meeting on the 19 June a short presentation will be delivered setting out:

- ☐ How the improvement journey has brought us to this point
- ☐ Overview of Option A

It is then proposed that the following recommendations be put to the OSC:

- a) Option A be supported, noting the need to maximise the use of limited Member capacity and availability
- b) Officers develop an implementation plan and work programme proposals for the delivery of Option A to be considered at the July OSC meeting, with the intention that they be implemented following that meeting
- c) An Access to Information Protocol that reflects matters raised in the scrutiny workshop, as well as the review of governance, and best practice, be brought for consideration to the July OSC meeting and the Combined Authority Board meeting
- d) An analysis of required officer support for the delivery of Option A be undertaken and reported to the Independent Improvement Board, along with a proposal to strengthen officer support to the scrutiny function, noting future English Devolution Accountability Framework requirements
- e) OSC recommend to the Combined Authority Board that the Combined Authority commit to developing a 6–12 month Forward Plan
- f) Ways of working between Board and Thematic Committees and the Scrutiny function be developed to drive opportunities for early OSC involvement in key decision-making and strategy development
- g) The Improvement Plan Highlight Report be presented to each informal scheduled supporting scrutiny meeting for review to help direct focus and challenge at subsequent OSC meetings.