

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Annual Report:

2022/23

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CAMBRIDGESHIRE
& PETERBOROUGH
COMBINED AUTHORITY

Combined authorities need strong governance to work well.... A part of that strong governance is overview and scrutiny' CfGS 2017.

FOREWORD FROM THE CHAIR & VICE CHAIR, COUNCILLOR LORNA DUPRE & COUNCILLOR ALAN SHARP

I am pleased to present the Overview & Scrutiny (O&S) Committee's Annual Report for the year 2022/23. I would like to thank the Members of the Committee for their hard work, knowledge and understanding of the issues that have come before the Committee, as well as the support they have provided to myself and the Vice Chair. I would also like to thank the various officers who have supported the Committee throughout the year, and the expertise of the contributors who have spoken to the Committee.

It has been a privilege to chair this Committee which scrutinises decisions and issues affecting the everyday lives of the people of the Combined Authority area. This report highlights the key work it has undertaken in the past year.

Conducting effective scrutiny will always require us to move beyond simple challenge, working instead as a critical friend to the Mayor and the decision-making Committees. As Members we are ambassadors for our own communities, and as such are able to give genuine local insight. Members of the Committee have worked constructively and positively to add real value to the areas the Committee has considered.

As a Committee we have looked at many issues including the Combined Authority's Local Transport Plan and the Combined Authority's budget, and I am particularly proud of how we have been reflective in our understanding of scrutiny. I should recognise that the Members of the Committee have given a significant commitment as many are also Members of parish councils, city or district councils and the County Council. I would like to particularly thank all those who have volunteered for Lead member and Rapporteur roles. I hope, and expect, that the level of commitment shown by Members of the Committee will continue in years to come and that our ambitions as a Committee can develop still further.

Cllr Lorna Dupre

Cllr Alan Sharp



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INTRODUCTION

The Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016 specified that all Combined Authorities establish at least one Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The CPCA O&S Committee was established by the Combined Authority in May 2017.

The role of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is to:

- ❖ Review or scrutinise decisions and actions taken by the Combined Authority or the Mayor.
- ❖ Make reports or recommendations to the Combined Authority Board
- ❖ Make reports or recommendations to the Mayor: with respect to the discharge of any functions that are the responsibility of the authority and on matters that affect the authority's area or the inhabitants of the area;
- ❖ In the exercise of its functions set out in the Constitution, the power of the Committee shall include the doing of anything which is calculated to facilitate or is conducive or incidental to the discharge of those functions.

The key benefits of Overview and Scrutiny at the CPCA may be seen as:

Providing an open and transparent forum in which to examine whether policies and strategies of the Combined Authority are meeting the needs of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

The Committee has the power of influence; it can make evidence-based recommendations that are informed by key stakeholders and partners of the Combined Authority, expert advice, public opinion and members experiences and knowledge – acting as a ‘critical friend’

The committee can challenge Combined Authority Board and the Mayor’s decisions. The Committee can ‘call-in’ a decision which has been made but not yet implemented. The Committee can:

- a) direct that a decision is not to be implemented while it is under review by the Committee, and
- b) recommend that the decision be reconsidered.

The O&S Committee’s Terms of Reference are at Annex A of this report.

MEMBERSHIP AND MEETINGS

Meetings

During 2022/23, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on the following dates:

- 13th June 2022
- 25th July 2022
- 17th October 2022
- 28th November 2022
- 10th January 2023
- 23rd January 2023
- 20th March 2023

The Committee met seven times in total and all meetings were quorate.

Membership

The membership comprises fourteen elected members with two members representing each of the Combined Authority's constituent councils. The political balance of the Committee reflects as closely as possible the political make up from across the County

The members for 2022/23 were:

Table 1: Councillor O&S Committee Membership 2022/23 as at 1st March 2023:

Labour	Conservative	Liberal Democrats
Cllr Smith (Cambridge City)	Cllr Coles (Peterborough City)	Cllr Atkins (Cambridgeshire County)
Cllr Robertson (Cambridge City)	Cllr Hassal (Huntingdonshire)	Cllr Harvey (South Cambs)
Cllr Iqbal (Peterborough City)	Cllr Neish (Huntingdonshire)	Cllr Van de Weyer (South Cambs)
	Cllr Goldsack (Cambridgeshire County)	Cllr Dupre (East Cambs)
	Cllr Hay (Fenland)	
	Cllr Miscandlon (Fenland)	
	Cllr Sharp (East Cambs)	

Lead Members

Under the current governance arrangements, decision making is distributed between the Combined Authority Board and the Executive Committees. There are three Executive Committees, Skills, Housing & Communities and Transport & Infrastructure. With significant decisions being taken by the Executive Committees, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has a role in scrutinising the work of those Committees. In order to do so, appointed members of O&S lead in respect of the work of each Executive Committee.

This Committee have also appointed a Lead Member to reflect the Mayor's priority relating to Climate Change.

The Committee has also appointed on an interim basis two members to cover the CAM and the Bus Review as important issues that need to be monitored by the Committee.

Appointed Lead Members

Committee	Lead Member
Housing Committee	Cllr Aidan Van de Weyer
Transport Committee	Cllr Goldsack
Skills Committee	Cllr Coles and Cllr Miscandlon
Business Board	Vacant
Climate Change	Cllr Michael Atkins

Rapporteur Roles

Rapporteurs provide an opportunity for O&S members to gain information in an informal capacity, ensuring they are equipped with all necessary information to allow them to undertake scrutiny work in a timely way. One or two members will investigate a particular issue on behalf of the wider Committee and report back their findings.

Rapporteur Roles Assigned:

Topic	Rapporteur
Community Learning	Cllr Coles
Housing Review	Cllr Van De Weyer

KEY ACTIVITIES

Highlights

The O&S Committee's key actions and recommendations during the year included:

- ❖ The Committee received the recommendations from the Governance review and considered their role in relation to this. (Further detail provided within report)
- ❖ The Committee received regular updates on the Improvement Plan (further detail provided within report) for the Combined Authority and agreed a new work programme that reflected the importance of this work for the Committee moving forward by having Improvement as a standing item.
- ❖ The Committee held its second Mayor's Question Time on the 17th October 2022.
- ❖ The Committee approved a new budget scrutiny process.
- ❖ In addition to the Lead Members for the Executive Committees the Committee agreed to create a Lead member for Finance and Budgetary issues
- ❖ The Committee held an extraordinary meeting to discuss and make recommendations to the CA Board on the Budget Consultation. (Further detail provided within report)
- ❖ The Committee received and reviewed the Bus Strategy.
- ❖ The Committee received and noted the Climate Action Plan
- ❖ The Committee received and noted an update on the Local Transport Connectivity Plan and the Demand Responsive Transport project.

IMPROVEMENT WORK

The Committee's work this year has been largely dominated by the work being undertaken by the Combined Authority in response to the letter received from the External Auditors in June 2022.

The Authority's external auditors wrote to the Chair of the Audit & Governance Committee on 1 June 2022 to notify him of their judgement that a value for money risk exists in the form of significant weakness in Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority's governance arrangements. The external auditor letter identified actions for the Authority to take.


It recommended that:

- ☐ ensuring the safeguarding of the Authority's staff was of paramount importance
- ☐ the Authority urgently ensure that it has sufficient appropriate leadership capacity to be able to deliver its objectives and statutory responsibilities
- ☐ more formal intervention is required, and expeditious discussions with the Authority's sponsoring department to this end are time critical

The Committee have received updates from the Chief Executive Officer and Lead Officers for the Improvement Plan at all of their meetings since June and the Chairs of both O&S Committee and A&G Committee have been working closely with one another to monitor the work being done on the Improvement Plan.

Following their meeting in January the Committee made the following recommendations to the Combined Authority Board:

- a) On reviewing the new Governance arrangements that form part of the Improvement Plan, the Committee highlighted the need for Overview and Scrutiny to be fully integrated with the new Committee structure, and for Members to be fully engaged and informed.
- b) In order to fulfil a developing role, the information provided to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee needed to be much more timely. The move to a Forward Plan giving up to six months' notice of items of business was welcomed and would aid the Committee to look ahead for priority strands of work.
- c) There was concern about the possible risk of non-alignment of the LTCP with emerging Government guidance and although officers allayed concerns to a degree and stated that there were unlikely to be any surprises, the Board would need to be mindful of Governmental delays impacting the pace of the Improvement Plan's implementation in this regard.
- d) The Mayoral ambition statement and the CA's Corporate Strategy needed to be triangulated with the objectives of Government as without this alignment there was a danger that the funding to deliver projects would not be forthcoming.

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- e) Given the focus on the Bus Strategy, more realistic timescales for bus franchising needed to be set. The Chief Executive outlined to Members that in two years' time the CPCA could be at the point of agreeing the business case for franchising but then there would need to be another period of time to implement plans and put in place the considerable number of staff that would be needed. The Chief Executive also referenced the need to factor in any unforeseen financial risk should the bus franchising operation not go to plan. This could further delay decision making or potentially derail the project if this underwriting of financial risk was not accepted by the CPCA. It was felt that this detail and nuance was not coming through in reports and documents
 - f) The Committee noted the number of amber ratings in the report and would ask Board Members to consider whether they were content that these were just due to a change of scope and more realistic timelines, or whether there were any other issues that should be of concern.

GOVERNANCE REVIEW

Key Actions:

- The Combined Authority Overview & Scrutiny Committee is engaged to identify requirements for reporting in a scrutiny context
- The Overview & Scrutiny Committee place developing the function and its identity in a Combined Authority context at the centre of its 2022/23 work programme, examining the 4 workstreams identified within this review.
- The Scrutiny Call-in process as detailed in the Constitution be updated to require justification for a call-in request in line with the principles of decision making

In response to the recommendations within the governance review which have also been fed into the work being done on the Improvement plan, the Combined Authority have approved the creation of new governance arrangements aligned to the Corporate Plan with clear roles and responsibilities for the Board and thematic committees – these new arrangements will enable the Committee to establish its function within the CA and provide a clear focus moving forward.

BUDGET AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN SCRUTINY AND CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

According to the CPCA Constitution the O&S Committee is a named consultee and therefore their feedback must be sought. The Committee agreed to hold an extraordinary meeting on the 10th January to enable the members to feedback within the consultation period.

The Committee resolved to submit the following recommendations to the Board as their formal response to the Consultation:

1. The CPCA Board should commit to maintaining at least the current level of spending on bus services for the next two years.
2. The Board is best placed to decide how to source this funding which would be c£14m. (£7m p.a) This commitment would give some assurance to residents that they can continue to travel to work and school, and to access services, and that the CPCA had a credible, fit for purpose transport system on which residents could depend. This guarantee on funding should be given whilst longer term solutions for delivering services, such as franchising, are explored.
3. The Board should be mindful that in the current climate bus operators could be expected to be further supported by CPCA subsidy and therefore maintaining the current level of spending did not necessarily guarantee the same level of services.
4. The Board should keep a particularly close eye on the risk of slippage on capital projects and review the work of Internal Audit so that where issues are identified they can establish how best to address and overcome them.
5. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee review in advance the process and methodology of any future proposed MTFP consultation. Oversight by the Committee will ensure that the questions asked are focussed and prioritise the CPCA's vision and strategy and will also allow Members to make recommendations to encourage greater engagement by the public.
6. If the organisation aspires to delivering more ambitious projects that will be reliant on government funding, then the budget for securing this funding needs to be increased.
7. The impact on social inequalities and the Environment should be evident in all CPCA funding decisions.
8. If the Board decide that a Mayoral Precept is the best option to raise funds then it should identify and guarantee what the money raised will be spent on. E.g. It has been identified that a precept of £12 per household at Band D council tax (with corresponding amounts for higher and lower bands) would raise the £3.5 million that it is estimated will be needed to maintain the current level of bus services.

CONCLUSION

Call Ins

There was no occasion for the use of call in this year.

Task & Finish Groups

The Committee did not set up any Task and Finish Groups this year; the Committee continued to appoint two members as rapporteurs to monitor the work done by previous groups.

Cllr Sharp – One CAM

Cllr Hay – Bus Review

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT

Member development focused primarily around budget briefing sessions and governance and improvement briefing sessions.

LOOKING FORWARD

At the March O&S Committee meeting the Committee received a report from officers providing a briefing on the new governance arrangements and options for how the O&S Committee to choose to operate within the new arrangements. The Committee were provided with 4 options and agreed that going forward they would operate (*to be inserted following decision of the Committee on 20th March 2023*)



Cllr Lorna Dupre

Chair

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Cllr Alan Sharp

Vice Chair

Overview and Scrutiny Committee