

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Annual Report:
2021/22

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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

We are pleased to present the Overview & Scrutiny (O&S) Committee's Annual Report for the year 2021/22. We 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 us as Chair and Vice Chair. We would also like to thank the various officers who have supported the Committee throughout the year, and 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 the Committee has undertaken in the past year.

We have actively sought on behalf of the Committee to seek a working solution to quoracy issues that have affected the Committee and this is work in progress.

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 have sought to be reflective in our understanding of scrutiny. Individual members have also carried out discrete pieces of work on issues ranging from the Devolution Deal to the Combined Authority's accommodation strategy. We 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. We would like to particularly thank all those who have volunteered for Lead member and Rapporteur roles. We 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

Face to face meetings were resumed from May 2021 as the legislation that allowed for remote meetings to be held during the Covid pandemic came to an end.

During 2021/22, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on the following dates:

- 28th June 2021
- 26th July 2021
- 23rd August 2021
- 27th September 2021
- 25th October 2021
- 22nd November 2021
- 13th December 2021
- 24th January 2022
- 28th March 2022

The Committee met nine 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 party political composition of member authorities across the County.

The members for 2021/22 were:

Table 1: Councillor O&S Committee Membership 2021/22 as at 11th March 2022:

| Labour | Conservative | Liberal Democrats |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Cllr Baigent (Cambridge) | Cllr Coles (Peterborough) | Cllr Atkins (Cambridgeshire) |
| Cllr Davey (Cambridge) | Cllr Corney (Huntingdonshire) | Cllr Rippeth (South Cambs) |
| Cllr Iqbal (Peterborough) | Cllr Dew (Huntingdonshire) | Cllr Van de Weyer (South Cambs) |
| | Cllr Goldsack (Cambridgeshire) | 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 year the Committee have also appointed a Lead Member to reflect the new 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 Baigent |
| Skills Committee | Cllr Coles and Cllr Miscandlon |
| Business Board | Cllr Doug Dew |
| Climate Change | Cllr Michael Atkins |

Rapporteur Roles

Rapporteur roles 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 |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| CPCA Accommodation Strategy | Cllr Goldsack |
| Devolution Deal | Cllr Dupre |
| Community Learning | Cllr Coles |

KEY ACTIVITIES

Highlights

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

- 1) The Committee received and have actioned the recommendations from the CfGS review.
- 2) The Committee held its first Mayor's Question Time on the 22nd November 2021; with the topics of the Mayor's Priorities and Affordable Housing being covered.
- 3) The Mayor attended two Committee meetings in his role as the Chair for the Transport Committee to answer questions from the Committee around the Local Transport Plan, Bus Review and other key transport issues.
- 4) In addition to the Lead Members for the Executive Committees the Committee created an additional Lead Member role to reflect the Mayor's priority and focus on Climate Change.
- 5) The Committee adopted the use of rapporteurs to cover specific areas of interest for the Committee.
- 6) The Committee adopted the use of a scoping document to introduce new items to their work programme.
- 7) The Committee approved new terms of reference in relation to the CPCA Trading Companies.

Questions and Recommendations to CA Board

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has adopted a pre-scrutiny model whereby it meets before every Combined Authority Board meeting to scrutinise the Board's agenda. At this meeting, the Committee shall discuss and formally agree by means of a vote a list of questions to be raised at the next Combined Authority Board meeting.

The agreed list of questions shall be raised by the Chair, on behalf of the Committee, at the next Combined Authority Board meeting.

The Committee asked a total of eight questions to the CA Board this year covering the following topics:

- Forward Plan
- East West Rail Consultation
- Climate Change
- iMET Opportunity and Combined Authority Needs

Sustainable Growth Ambition Statement and 2022/23 Draft Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan 2022-2026

The Committee received the draft Sustainable Growth Ambition Statement and 2022/23 Draft Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan 2022-2026 and invited the Director for Delivery and Strategy and Chief Finance Officer to attend two sessions where the Committee asked questions and made comments on the draft document. The Committee raised concerns around the lack of detail and the lack of completeness on the budget as it went out to public consultation.

Rapporteur Work

- ❖ Accommodation Strategy – the Committee were invited by the then Chief Executive Officer to investigate the current and future accommodation needs of the Combined Authority. Cllr Goldsack was appointed as the rapporteur and reported to the Committee that the Combined Authority is much closer to concluding its search for accommodation than was previously understood to be the case.
- ❖ Devolution Deal – The Committee agreed that the Chair should carry out a piece of work to review actions taken by the various parties to the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Devolution Deal to meet its 71 commitments, and plans to meet outstanding commitments and to consider the potential to refresh or update the Devolution Deal. The Committee agreed that it should continue to review the current arrangements for monitoring the initiatives contained in the Devolution Deal agreed by Government and the constituent members of the Combined Authority in 2016 and consider where these might be improved. The Committee recommended the report to the CA Board. The Committee will continue to monitor the Deal on a six-monthly basis commencing in June 2022 so that the Committee might make recommendations to inform development.
- ❖ Community Learning – TBC

Call In's

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 Group's this year; the Committee appointed two members as rapporteurs to monitor the work done by previous groups.
Cllr Davey – One CAM
Cllr Hay – Bus Review

CENTRE FOR GOVERNANCE AND SCRUTINY REVIEW

At the end of the last municipal year the O&S Committee, with the agreement of the CA Board, commissioned the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny to carry out a review of their scrutiny arrangements with recommendations being presented to the Committee in June 2021.

Summary of the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny 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:

- ❖ 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 was required and therefore the Committee should consider moving 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 report from CfGS recommended a new approach to the sharing of information with scrutiny members which involved 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 was developed to ensure



the committee received information in a timely accessible format to help inform their work.

- ❖ The report from CfGS recommended the programming of a regular and general Mayor's Question Time to allow high profile, direct holding to account of the Mayor to continue.
- ❖ 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.
- ❖ 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.

The findings from the review were presented to the CA Board in September and it was requested that the Committee report back to the Board on how effective the review had been. The review of the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny work and recommendations and the benefit to the O&S Committee can be found at Appendix B to this report.

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT

Member Development

There was a programme of Members' development sessions through the year involving:

- Member Induction
- Centre for Governance and Scrutiny Workshop – Review Feedback
- Budget and SAGS Workshop
- Trading Companies

Future Development and Plans for 2022/23

- Evaluation of the work of scrutiny
- Mid Year Budget refresh
- Devolution Deal monitoring
- Strategic focus
- Governance Review Outcomes

Cllr Lorna Dupre

Chair

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Cllr Alan Sharp

Vice Chair

Overview and Scrutiny Committee