



Combined Authority Board

Wednesday 31 January 2024

Venue:	Council Chamber, South Cambridgeshire District Council, Cambourne	
Time:	10.00 to 14:25 (break from 12.45 to 13.08)	
Present:	Mayor Dr Nik Johnson Councillor A Smith Councillor L Nethsingha Councillor A Bailey Councillor C Boden Councillor M Farooq Councillor S Conboy Councillor B Smith A Kingsley	Cambridge City Council (Statutory Deputy Mayor) Cambridgeshire County Council East Cambridgeshire District Council Fenland District Council Peterborough City Council Huntingdonshire District Council South Cambridgeshire District Council Chair of the Business Board
Co-Opted Members:	Councillor E Murphy J. Peach J O'Brien	Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority Police and Crime Commissioner (substitute) Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Integrated Care Board
Apologies	D Preston	Police and Crime Commissioner

Minutes:

1	Announcements, Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest
	<p>Apologies for absence were reported as set out above.</p> <p>Cllr Boden declared a non-pecuniary interest as a trustee of FACT.</p> <p>The Mayor addressed the correspondence received from the Minister of Levelling Up Housing and Communities, which highlighted the undeniable progress made over the past 18 months. He expressed gratitude towards the officers for their dedication and numerous successes: evident through the consistent theme of improvement. The Mayor emphasized his leadership stance focused on cooperation rather than competition, recognising the substantial impact of fostering a cooperative disposition within the complex political environment. He stressed the importance of understanding relationship dynamics and bridging gaps, aligning with both constituents' expectations and government directives. He called for a commitment to a strong partnership to develop strategic priorities benefiting local residents, citing a recent workshop as a successful example of collaborative consensus-building. Moving forward, he pledged to continue encouraging and facilitating action while keeping the option for cooperation open. The Mayor reaffirmed his dedication to championing the increasingly progressive initiatives of the organisation and expressed gratitude to board colleagues for their collective pursuit of shared goals.</p>
2	Combined Authority Membership Update September 2023
	<p>The Board received a report outlining changes to the membership of board and committees of the Combined Authority.</p> <p>It was resolved to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A Note the appointment by Peterborough City Council of Councillor Chris Harper as the substitute member from Peterborough 1st on the Combined Authority's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.B Note the temporary change in substitute member from Peterborough City Council on the Transport and Infrastructure Committee on 17 January 2024.C Note the change in substitute member from Cambridge City Council on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

3	Minutes
	The minutes of the meeting on 29 November 2023 were approved as an accurate record and signed by the Mayor. The minutes action log was noted.
4	Petitions
	No petitions were received.
5	Public Questions
	Five public questions were received in advance of the meeting in accordance with the procedure rules in the Constitution. A copy of the questions and responses can be viewed here when available.
6	Forward Plan
	It was resolved unanimously to: A Approve the Forward Plan for January 2024
9	Mayor's Budget <i>Councillor Boden left the meeting during this agenda item</i>
	<p>The Mayor presented his proposed budget for the financial year 2024/25. Key highlights included plans to enhance public transportation by increasing routes and frequency, with a notable reduction in travel costs for individuals under 25 years of age. The Mayor expressed confidence in the ambitious proposals, emphasizing their potential for significant progress and sought support from the board.</p> <p>Councillor Anna Smith, the Deputy Mayor chaired this section of the meeting.</p> <p>During the ensuing discussion, several board members shared their perspectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor Sarah Conboy expressed awareness of the financial challenges facing local authorities and acknowledged concerns regarding the proposed precept increase. However, she voiced support for the initiative, particularly emphasising its benefits for vulnerable residents and rural areas. • Councillor Bridget Smith highlighted the consensus within her council in support of the precept increase due to the inadequacy of the current public transport system, which exacerbates inequality and limits opportunities for residents. She suggested revisiting the extension of park and ride hours for further consideration. • Acknowledging the rarity of discussing an expansion of the bus service in the current climate, Councillor Lucy Nethsingha highlighted the significance of the opportunity. She recognised the financial burden on taxpayers but stressed the long-term benefits of improved public transportation, particularly for rural communities. • Expressing gratitude to the officers for their efforts, Councillor Mohammed Farooq signalled his support for the proposed budget, citing the importance of investing in public transport despite the challenges of setting a budget during a period of high living costs. • Councillor Anna Bailey expressed opposition to the precept increase, advocating for fiscal responsibility and innovation to address transportation challenges without burdening taxpayers. She highlighted concerns about the distribution of funding and the need for rigorous budget scrutiny. • John Peach cited recent BBC Look East reports on expensive subsidised buses in Cambridgeshire and compared it to Norfolk, who received government funding. Having been told that last year's precept was to be a one-off, he queried whether enough work was done on negotiation of contracts to get the best value and whether more operators can be brought into the area. • Al Kingsley stressed the importance of accessibility and skills, urging a long-term vision for strategic innovation. A further look at a bigger programme will be needed targeting routes and ensuring fairness. He stressed the need for substantial bus service enhancements beyond boosting ridership. <p>The discussion also touched upon various aspects of the proposed budget, including the allocation of funds, service improvements, and potential collaborations with other organizations, such as the NHS.</p>

Following the discussion, the Mayor thanked the participants for their valuable contributions and noted the action to explore further collaborative opportunities, particularly with the NHS on travel-related matters.

On being proposed by the Mayor, seconded by Councillor Anna Smith, it was resolved to:

- A To note the proposed Mayoral budget for 2024-25, including the proposal to increase the precept by £24 per annum to £36 for a Band D property, and to provide comments to the Mayor regarding the proposed Mayoral Budget
- B To approve the draft Mayoral Budget, including the proposed Mayoral precept noted above.
- C To note the proposed routes to be funded by the proposed precept and the process by which these routes will be finalised and approved
- D Delegate minor changes to the Mayor's budget, due to finalisation of council tax base figures, to the Executive Director of Resources and Performance

The voting was recorded as follows, with a majority in favour, less than 2/3 of constituent council members present and voting having voted against:

	For	Against	Abstain
Councillor Anna Bailey		X	
Councillor Sarah Conboy	X		
Councillor Mohammed Farooq	X		
Councillor Lucy Nethsingha	X		
Councillor Anna Smith	X		
Councillor Bridget Smith	X		

10 Draft 2024/25 Corporate Strategy and Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan 2024/2028

The Mayor resumed chairing.

Executive Director, Resources and Performance, along with the Director Policy and Engagement, introduced the report, emphasising key points to members. It was noted that pending any decision on the MTFP, the financial elements of the corporate strategy would be updated accordingly. The consultation period, which ran from November 30th, 2023, to January 15th, 2024, involved extensive engagement with the public and constituent councils, as well as various stakeholder groups, including thematic committees and the Business Board.

During the ensuing discussion, several points were raised by Board members:

- Councillor Bridget Smith expressed appreciation for the consultations, particularly with Chief Executives, ensuring that plans of constituent authorities were considered. She raised concerns about the development of a new equality, diversity and inclusion strategy as the responsibility for that is to be removed from Local Authorities by government. Officers confirmed the commitment to take that forward to meet best practice and explained that there would be no legal implications. The Mayor stated he would make a Mayoral priority to ensure equalities in the region.
- Al Kingsley confirmed unanimous support from the Business Board, highlighting the balanced approach, rationale, and flexibility of the proposed strategy.
- Commending the comprehensive nature of the Corporate Plan and its alignment with the goals of the Combined Authority (CA), Councillor Sarah Conboy reflected that it speaks volumes about where we are going and what we are trying to achieve.
- John O'Brien emphasised the value of the golden thread; providing a frame for wider partnerships.
- Councillor Mohammed Farooq praised the framework's ambition and raised a query regarding match funding opportunities for cultural projects.
- Confirming her support of most of the content, Councillor Anna Bailey suggested improvements in articulating project contributions, addressing inequalities, and measuring outcomes.
- Councillor Lucy Nethsingha expressed gratitude for the stability in the transport levy and highlighted the increased confidence in managing skills budgets.
- Echoing the sentiments from other Board Members regarding the improvement to the process, Councillor Anna Smith thanked the officers for their diligent work.
- John Peach confirmed broad support from the Police and Crime Commissioner.

On being proposed by the Mayor, seconded by Councillor Anna Smith, it was resolved to:

- A Note the consultation feedback received during the consultation period running from 30th November 2023 to 15th January 2024
- B Approve the draft Corporate Strategy following the refresh subject to the inclusion of the final financial information once the budget is approved.
- C Approve the Draft Budget for 2024-25 and the Medium-Term Financial Plan 2024-25 to 2027-28 as contained in Appendices C and D
- D Delegate any minor changes required to the budget to the Executive Director of Resources and Performance.

Recommendations B and D above were agreed by majority (6 for, 0 against, 1 abstention).

The voting was recorded as follows for recommendation C:

	For	Against	Abstain
Mayor Dr Nik Johnson	X		
Councillor Anna Bailey		X	
Councillor Sarah Conboy	X		
Councillor Mohammed Farooq	X		
Councillor Lucy Nethsingha	X		
Councillor Anna Smith	X		
Councillor Bridget Smith	X		
Al Kingsley	X		

7 Combined Authority Chief Executive Highlights Report

The Chief Executive introduced the report and highlighted key points to Board members.

During discussion, Board members queried the timeframe and cost of the interventions required to overcome the blockages identified by the infrastructure framework. Officers confirmed that work is progressing based on data provided by the constituent authorities. A report is planned to be brought to the Environment and Sustainable Communities in June which will set out the blockages and cumulative impacts.

The excellent work in addressing FE coldspots was commended, and the importance of working together on issues that matter across the whole region emphasised.

It was resolved to:

- A Note the content of the report.

8 Committee Calendar

The Interim Director Legal and Governance introduced the report and highlighted key points to Board members including:

On being proposed by Councillor Eddna Murphy, seconded by the Mayor, it was resolved to: [7 for, 1 abstention]

- A Approve the calendar of meetings for the 2024/25 Municipal Year.

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Meeting adjourned from 12.40-13.08
Councillor Murphy left the meeting during the break.
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11 Improvement Plan Update

The Chief Executive initiated the discussion on the reissuing of the Best Value Notice for another six months, expressing disappointment but realism regarding the necessity of the action. The Improvement Board remains in place, and it is important to note the Department for Levelling Up, Housing, and Communities' (DLUHC) recognition of the CA's efforts. The Notice delineates areas of focus, emphasising collaboration and shared purpose to ensure success. He underscored the importance of acknowledging staff and outlined plans to discuss with them the way forward for the next six months and beyond.

	<p>The Interim Director, Transformation Programme, talked through the next steps following the reissue of the Best Value Notice. The direction given supports the Combined Authority's intentions and existing strategies, with progress acknowledged and the need for ongoing improvement efforts recognised. The letter is clear that we need to have measurable outcomes and to commit through strong partnership working the development of strategic priorities and delivery strategy. Full use of the Independent Improvement Board will be utilised as it continues.</p> <p>During the ensuing discussion, several points were raised by Board members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As the Lead Member for Devolution, Councillor Sarah Conboy expressed disappointment but emphasised the importance of staff morale and unity in pursuing the devolution deal's benefits for the region. • Councillor Anna Smith echoed the sentiment, acknowledging progress while seeking clarity on expectations and funding continuity. • Al Kingsley highlighted efforts to engage stakeholders and urged a forward-looking approach to address identified gaps. He also highlighted that there may be a lot that is being done by way of partnership working that is not being shared. • Councillor Anna Bailey underscored transparency, accountability, and unresolved issues' impact on progress, advocating for improved public communication. • Questioning the timing and information dissemination process, Councillor Bridget Smith emphasised the importance of board-level cultural change and a need for that to be measured. • Councillor Lucy Nethsingha noted the progress made despite challenges and urged clarity from the government on expectations and issues. • Having only been on the Board since November, Councillor Mohammed Farooq provided a positive snapshot of the Combined Authority's current state, emphasising the need for clear guidance and functional systems. <p>In response, it was clarified that efforts would continue to seek clarity from DLUHC, establish revised improvement plans, and enhance evidence-based decision-making. The importance of measuring culture and embedding values and behaviours within the board's operations was emphasised.</p> <p>It was resolved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Note the progress made over November and December against stated areas of improvement identified by the External Auditor in June 2022 and Best Value Notice received in January 2023 as reported to the CA Board on 31 May 2023, set out in paragraphs 2.2 to 2.8. B Note the feedback from the Chair, Independent Improvement Board following its meeting on 16 January 2024 set out in Appendix B. C Note the outcome of the recent Internal Review of the Project planning and delivery improvement programme set out in paragraph 2.9. D Note the proposed transition from the current Improvement plan to transformation activity, embedded across and down through the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority where delivery against the Improvement plan has been completed; as set out in paragraph 2.10 E Note the intention to review the current role and focus for the Independent Improvement Board as set out in paragraph 2.11.
	<p style="text-align: center;">---o0o---</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Al Kingsley, John Peach and Councillor Sarah Conboy left the meeting at 13.52</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">---o0o---</p>
12	<p>Budget Update Report January 2024</p> <p>The Assistant Director, Finance, introduced the report and highlighted key points to members.</p> <p>It was resolved to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Note the financial position of the Combined Authority

13	<p>Recommendations from the Transport and Infrastructure Committee</p> <p>The Board was advised that all recommendations had been supported by the Transport and Infrastructure Committee at its meeting on 17 January 2024.</p> <p>Councillor Anna Bailey asked if data was available regarding unique users of TING. Officers stated that the information was important but not made available by the operator, adding that had it been the recommendations from the consultants would very likely have been the same. Officers would ensure that data on unique users will be required as part of contracts for new DRT services going forward.</p> <p>On being proposed by Councillor A Smith, seconded by Councillor Mayor, it was resolved unanimously to approve all the recommendations as set out below:</p> <p>Bus Strategy Update</p> <p>A approve the proposals for the two remaining tendered bus services which were placed under review and the bus services which data was previously unavailable.</p> <p>Peterborough Station Update</p> <p>A approve the Outline Business Case and approve the commencement of the Full Business Case (subject to approval from the Department for Transport).</p>
14	<p>Recommendations from the Skills and Employment Committee</p> <p>The Board was advised that all recommendations had been supported by the Skills and Employment Committee at its meeting on 15 January 2024.</p> <p>It was resolved to approve all the recommendations as set out below:</p> <p>Skills Bootcamps</p> <p>On being proposed by Councillor Nethsingha, seconded by Councillor Bridget Smith, it was resolved unanimously to:</p> <p>A To note the Combined Authority's Grant Proposal to the Department for Education (DfE) in September 2023 for £2,899,390 to deliver (Wave Five) Skills Bootcamp provision during the 2024-25 Financial Year – and to note that we received confirmation from the DfE on 12 December 2023 that our Grant Proposal has been successful.</p> <p>B To accept the full grant funding offer from the DfE of £2,899,390 and approve corresponding expenditure across two budgets; one for the training funding allocation totalling £2,635,800 and one for the management funding allocation totalling £263,580 of the Wave Five Skills Bootcamps in the 2024-25 budget.</p> <p>C To delegate authority to the Assistant Director of Skills, in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrange for the awards and enter into grant funding agreements or service contracts with training providers to deliver Wave Five Skills Bootcamps. This can either be with existing providers, or where the Combined Authority follows a procurement exercise compliant with the Combined Authority's Constitution and procurement legislation. • Extend and/or vary contracts with existing providers where appropriate.
<p>It was resolved to exclude the press and public from the meeting on the grounds that exempt information under Part 1 of Schedule 12A the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, would be discussed and that it would not be in the public interest for this information to be disclosed. That is, information relating to an individual; information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual; and information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). The public interest in maintaining the exemption was deemed to outweigh the public interest in the information's release.</p>	
15	<p>Subsidiary Company Update</p>
<p>Officers updated the Board members on time sensitive matters related to the Peterborough R&D Property Company Limited (PropCo2).</p>	