



Combined Authority Board		Agenda Item
20 March 2024		14
Title:	Update on State of the Region 2024	
Report of:	Jules Ient, Head of Policy, Insight and Performance	
Lead Member:	Mayor, Dr Nik Johnson	
Public Report:	Yes	
Key Decision:	No	
Voting Arrangements:	N/a	

Recommendations:	
A	Note progress to develop the 2024 State of the Region review.
B	Note proposed further development in future years.

Strategic Objective(s):	
The proposals within this report fit under the following strategic objective(s):	
X	Achieving ambitious skills and employment opportunities
X	Achieving good growth
X	Increased connectivity
X	Enabling resilient communities
X	Achieving Best Value and High Performance
The State of the Region review evidence base will inform decision making across all five strategic objectives.	

1. Purpose	
1.1	<p>This paper outlines the purpose and benefits of the State of the Region Review, progress, stakeholder feedback received to date, next steps and future plans. Specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Section 2 describes the rationale for and benefits of State of the Region 2024.• Sections 3 describes the collaborative framework around the project.• Sections 4&5 describe progress and stakeholder feedback to date.• Section 6 describes the planned next steps for the completion of State of the Region 2024.• Section 7 sets out proposed future development of State of the Region 2025 and beyond.• Section 8 describes the background to the project.

2. Rationale and benefits

4.1	The need for a robust and up-to-date State of the Region evidence base to underpin Combined Authority (CA) decision making was identified in the 2022 Improvement Programme. It also features as a key deliverable in the 2023-2025 Corporate Strategy.
4.2	A comprehensive and transparent State of the Region evidence base is considered best practice for Combined Authorities. A best practice review has highlighted that West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA), West Midlands Combine Authority (WMCA)) and Greater London Authority (GLA) have produced State of the Region reports.
4.3	<p>The agreed objectives of the State of the Region 2024 review are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create a relevant, reliable and accessible evidence base on the current state of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Region.• Assess the impact of recent macro-economic factors on how residents live, and businesses operate.• Champion the contribution the region is making regionally, nationally, and internationally.• Ensure the evidence base adds value to what is already being done locally and is aligned with locally established methodologies and reporting measures.• Ensure that the evidence base is accessible to stakeholders from diverse sectors including local government, business and voluntary and community.• Gain visibility and buy-in for the evidence base through communications and engagement.• Achieve best value use of public funding by building on existing work.• Build local data analysis and interpretation skills and capacity.• Future proof the evidence base with an annual refresh and automation interacting with external datasets.
4.4	<p>The planned outcomes of the State of the Region 2024 review are for the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The CA, its partners and stakeholders understand the current and potential future economic, socio-economic and environmental state of the region, and how recent macro-economic factors have impacted how residents live and businesses operate.• Findings to inform conversations and positioning with government, national and regional stakeholders.• Findings to give a clear sense of priorities, to inform future strategies, programmes, deepening devolution proposals and inward investment.• Findings to inform the development of a long-term ambition for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough as a place.• Findings are perceived as a call to action for co-ordinated policy development and delivery of projects, services, and investment to realise a shared ambition.• CA and its partners and stakeholders to use the evidence base to inform strategic planning and identify funding opportunities.• Public to have easier access to the data.• CA's values to be embedded and visible through this work.

3. Collaborative Approach

3.1	The State of the Region 2024 review has been co-designed and co-produced with a broad partnership of local government, higher education, health, and voluntary and community sector partners.
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3.2	A Technical Working Group meets fortnightly and is responsible for providing technical advice and expertise to aid the development of the State of the Region 2024.
3.3	A State of the Region and Shared Ambition Working Group meets monthly and is responsible for overseeing the State of the Region and Shared Ambition projects and acts as a sounding board and critical friend to the Technical and Engagement Working Groups. This includes reviewing and assessing the key plans and outputs, identifying interdependencies and opportunities between these projects and other work being delivered by partners.

4. Progress to date	
4.1	<p>The State of the Region 2024 project has been structured across eight workstreams, with continuous engagement, co-design and iterative feedback built into the approach throughout. Workstreams 1-4 are complete, workstreams 5-7 are in progress and workstreams 8-9 are pending.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Policy & Strategy Review 2. Literature and Best Practice Review 3. Data Framework and Indicators Development 4. Progress Update Report 5. Data Collection and Gap Analysis 6. Beta Dashboard Development 7. Promotion and Communication 8. Report and Digital Assets 9. Handover, Training and Support
4.2	<p>Policy and Strategy Review – complete</p> <p>A Policy and Strategy review has developed understanding of partners’ current and planned policies and strategies, identifying the themes and indicators that will provide the most useful evidence and fully reflect the region’s anticipated analytical and future policy work. A total of sixteen interviews have taken place with key stakeholders to inform this.</p>
4.3	<p>Literature and Best Practice Review – complete</p> <p>The Literature and Best Practice review has reviewed other Combined Authorities’ State of the Region evidence bases, other international and national indicator frameworks (including the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals, Doughnut Economics, Six Capitals, Wellbeing Goals and the Legatum Prosperity Index) and relevant academic literature. This has built understanding of best practice in indicator frameworks, dashboard interaction and data storytelling. Findings have been shared with partners, with the headlines being:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The identification of key thematic areas is commonplace amongst the best practice approaches reviewed. However, there is no uniform approach to selecting themes of indicators: themes are bespoke and chosen to align with local/regional policy and strategy framework.

- The majority of indicators in the reports and dashboards reviewed primarily make use of national data sets. However, Cambridge and London demonstrate how locally-specific datasets can bring additional insight to the understanding of a region.
- Dashboards enable users to interrogate the data behind associated reports and compare indicators across different locations and dates. A dashboard containing different visualisation methods can assist with data understanding while additional links to methodology and data sources enable users to delve deeper and perform additional analysis.
- Storytelling presents an opportunity to enhance user engagement.

4.4 Data Framework and Indicators development – complete

A workshop was held with stakeholders to validate the emerging themes and arrive at a recommended structure of themes to underpin the State of the Region review. The process arrived at the identification of eight themes – five core and three cross-cutting. Proposed core themes are Business & Enterprise; Health and Wellbeing; Workforce, Jobs and Skills; Wildlife and Nature; and Net Zero and Climate Resilience. Cross-cutting themes are Tackling Inequality, Place and Connectivity.

The development of detailed indicators has been supported by a comprehensive bottom-up process and appraisal to select the best indicators across each of the identified themes. Appraisal has arrived at a proposed set of over 110 priority metrics.

The appraisal criteria were:

- Alignment with existing local frameworks
- The degree of trust in the data
- The relevance of the data
- The degree to which the data supports future needs
- The ease of understanding of the data
- The degree to which the data is up-to-date or current
- The degree to which the data can be split by, or linked to data on protected characteristics
- Any restrictive licenses or costs
- The ability to utilise time series to observe trends through time
- The degree to which the data is locally sourced
- The degree to which the data is expected to remain available in coming years
- The ability to drill down by geography
- The availability of comparators
- The degree to which the data ingestion and processing can be automated

Key:
Green - Core themes
Blue - Cross cutting themes

4.5 Progress Update Report – complete

This report has provided a snapshot of progress to date and a sample of initial data analysis, to help stakeholders understand the future scope and presentation of the evidence base and direction of travel. Further feedback is welcomed.

4.6 Data Collection and Gap Analysis – in progress

Each priority metric is being investigated to develop an agreed analysis and data collection methodology and identify gaps in data availability.

4.7 Beta Dashboard Development – in progress

Work is underway to co-design an interactive dashboard that adds value to local digital assets and is accessible for intended audiences. A key input to the final report will be a storyboard. This will map out the narrative and key data used from start to finish and, as an evolving document, enable and invite

	feedback and questions from stakeholders. Stakeholders have engaged with a collaborative dashboard storyboarding workshop.
4.8	<p>Promotion and Communication – in progress</p> <p>Consideration is being given to branding and communication of the State of the Region 2024 report and digital assets, to ensure it best supports dissemination of, and engagement with the relevant data assets. Agreeing clear branding and communication will ensure alignment within the final deliverables of the State of the Region to deliver a coherent, joined-up narrative.</p>

5. Summary of stakeholder feedback	
5.1	A progress update report has been reviewed by Combined Authority Chief Executives and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Public Service Board, Leaders Strategy Meeting and Overview and Scrutiny Committee Informal Meeting. A summary of the feedback received is highlighted in paragraphs 5.2 to 5.9.
5.2	<p>Reception</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for this important piece of work, which will be one unifying place for people to gain a better understanding of the region. • Seen as moving in the right direction and catching up with best practice for Combined Authorities. • Disappointment at limited breadth of initial analysis shared at this point.
5.3	<p>Collaboration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desire to shape the project and provide feedback on what is most interesting and relevant. • Consideration to working group representation from the Police and Crime Commissioner's office. • Interested in direct access to data.
5.4	<p>Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to challenge inequalities and ensure these are clearly drawn out. • Opportunity for constituent authorities and wider partners to think about how to use it individually and collectively. • Important to gain engagement from all CA members and officers and that the data will be widely used. • Important to focus on what is relevant to what the CA can change and what influences the lives of residents. • Challenge to provide new insight and add value to the work that already exists.
5.5	<p>Name</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggestion to change name of project to State of the Region 2024 to distinguish from future State of the Region reviews.
5.6	<p>Economic analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation of the importance of data sharing and integration with existing frameworks. • Need to review relevance of sector categories to reflect Higher Education (HE) knowledge transfer and agriculture strengths of the region. • Important to bring out skills and economic inactivity data.
5.7	<p>Infrastructure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Request to see infrastructure overlaid on geospatial analysis. • Welcome seeing planned growth, housing and industrial development. • Information about house prices is helpful.

5.8	<p>Disaggregation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interest in breakdown by local authority district and lower super output area, to highlight geographic differences and identify problems and opportunities. • Breakdown by ethnicity important, and more granular analysis by ethnicity and wider protected characteristics would be valued.
5.9	<p>Presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to ensure clear visualisations e.g. labelling of keys. • Need to ensure that the use of acronyms is avoided.

6. 2024 review - planned next steps

6.1	<p>Data Collection, Analysis and Visualisation</p> <p>Further work will take place to collect, analyse and visualise the data aligned to the project methodology and in response to stakeholder feedback. The project will achieve best value by aligning with and building on existing local and regional frameworks, reusing existing data and analysis where it exists. The review will add value by filling gaps and layering and grouping different indicators. This will enable data to be compared across geographies. An analysis of desired information compared to what is currently available will highlight opportunities to commission new research.</p>
6.2	<p>Digital assets</p> <p>Work will continue to co-develop an interactive dashboard, including user testing workshops to gain feedback from intended audiences on a beta version.</p>
6.3	<p>Promotion and Communication</p> <p>A promotion campaign plan to support the roll out of the State of the Region 2024 will be developed. The aim is to launch the State of the Region 2024 report and digital assets to stakeholders in July 2024.</p>
6.4	<p>Approval of State of the Region Report and Digital Assets</p> <p>The aim is to present the State of the Region 2024 report and associated digital assets to Overview & Scrutiny Committee Board in July 2024.</p>
6.5	<p>Handover support</p> <p>All data will be handed over to the CA and training and process documentation will be provided, to enable future annual updates to be undertaken in-house.</p>

7. Proposed future development - State of the Region 2025 and beyond

7.1	<p>An annual update of the data, dashboard and report will be developed by the CA's Policy, Insight and Performance team in collaboration with partners.</p>
7.2	<p>For some of the proposed indicators, data is not currently available at the desired level of granularity e.g. by local super output area or by a specific protected characteristic. Where appropriate, new research will be commissioned to fill identified gaps.</p>
7.3	<p>In parallel, the CA and other partners from the region sit on the Oxford and Cambridge Partnership's Data Observatory steering group. The two projects are at a similar stage with similar objectives. Potential areas for collaboration are being explored including aligning the two frameworks, sharing learning and co-commissioning new research.</p>

8. Background

8.1	In October 2022, Board approved the Improvement Plan with the action in Workstream A “Insight and evidence are used to assess the state of the region and inform policy direction and priorities for the CA”.
8.2	In January 2023, Board approved the 2023-25 Corporate Strategy with the deliverable “During 2023/24 the Combined Authority will work with partners across the area to undertake a ‘State of the Region’ review. The review will enable the next evidence-based strategy to be formed that embraces innovation, seeks opportunities, and identifies future desired devolution. This will build upon the outcomes achieved because of this strategy and agree the policies and actions needed to achieve a prosperous and sustainable Cambridgeshire and Peterborough on into the future.”
8.3	In June 2023, a workshop took place with stakeholders, to co-develop the scope of the project. The workshop sought views on strengths and weaknesses of the previous Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Independent Economic Review, extent of any refresh, opportunities for co-development, timescales, extent of wider engagement and how to build on existing data and insight.
8.4	In July 2023, Board agreed to endorse the planned refresh of the previous Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Independent Economic Review evidence base to inform a new State of the Region Review, and approved drawdown of £150k funding to resource the work.
8.5	City Science were appointed as consultants to the project in November 2023, following an open competitive procurement process.

9. Appendices

9.1	None
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10. Implications

Financial Implications

10.1	There are no new financial implications from this report.
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Legal Implications

10.2	There are no legal implications. However, the contents of this report demonstrate that the Combined Authority is complying with its best value duty.
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Public Health Implications

10.3	The impact of State of the Region 2024 will contain information and evidence about the health and wellbeing of the area. One of the 5 core themes is health and wellbeing. As a regional report it will then inform stakeholders and deliver partners to enable maximising public health benefits resulting from delivering sustainable growth and tackling inequalities.
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Environmental & Climate Change Implications

10.4	The impact of State of the Region 2024 is anticipated to include better decision making around achievement of the national statutory requirement of Net Zero emissions and delivery of local targets and strategies.
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Other Significant Implications

10.5	None
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Background Papers

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