


COMBINED AUTHORITY BOARD
WEDNESDAY, 16 OCTOBER 2024

Venue:	Town Hall, Market Hill, Huntingdon, PE29 3PJ	
Time:	10.30 am	
Present:	Dr Nik Johnson Councillor Anna Bailey Councillor Chris Boden Councillor Sarah Conboy Councillor Lucy Nethsingha Councillor Bridget Smith Councillor Mohammed Jamil Councillor Mike Davey Al Kingsley	Mayor East Cambridgeshire District Council Fenland District Council Huntingdonshire District Council Cambridgeshire County Council South Cambridgeshire District Council Peterborough City Council (substitute) Cambridge City Council (substitute) Chair of the Business Board
Co-Opted Members:	John O'Brien Darryl Preston	Integrated Care Board Police and Crime Commissioner
Apologies:	Councillor Dennis Jones Councillor Anna Smith Councillor Edna Murphy	Peterborough City Council Cambridge City Council Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority

Minutes

1	Announcements
	The Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting, and advised he would be using his prerogative as Mayor to adjust the running order of the meeting. Note, the items were taken in the following order: 1-7, 9-18, 8.
2	Apologies for Absence
	Apologies were received from Councillor Dennis Jones (Councillor Mohammed Jamil substituting), Councillor Anna Smith (Councillor Mike Davey substituting) and Councillor Edna Murphy.
3	Declaration of Interests
	There were no declaration of interests made.
4	Combined Authority Membership Update
	The Board received a report outlining changes to the membership of board and committees of the Combined Authority. It was resolved to: A Note the changes in membership from East Cambridgeshire District Council on the Combined Authority's Skills and Employment Committee. B Note the temporary change in substitute member from Fenland District Council on the Combined Authority's Audit and Governance Committee. C Note the temporary change in substitute member from Huntingdonshire District Council on the Combined Authority Board for the November meeting. D Note the change of substitute member from Cambridge City Council on the Combined Authority's Investment Committee.

	E Note the appointment of a member of the Combined Authority's Investment Committee to a new Business Growth Steering Group.
5	Minutes of the previous meeting
	The minutes of the meeting on 4 September 2024 were approved as an accurate record and signed by the Mayor. The action log was noted.
6	Petitions
	No petitions were received.
7	Public and Member Questions
	Two public questions and two member questions were received in advance of the meeting. The questions and responses are published here .
8	Motions
	<p>The motion as submitted was proposed by Councillor Anna Bailey, seconded by Councillor Chris Boden.</p> <p>An amendment to the motion was proposed by Councillor Mike Davey, seconded by Councillor Mohammed Jamil.</p> <p>On being put to the vote, the amendment was carried by a majority [6 in favour, 2 against, 1 abstention].</p> <p>During discussion, members emphasised the need for different authorities to understand their roles. The need to be aware of the perception of a stigma around claiming pension credit was highlighted. It is vitally important to ensure people know their entitlements and where to seek help, support is required for the vulnerable.</p> <p>The political nature of the amendment was noted, with a request for a compromise to enable prioritisation of poor pensioners over party politics. The substantive motion was carried a majority [6 for, 2 against, 1 abstention]</p> <p>This Authority notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Labour Government has made the difficult decision to means test Winter Fuel Payments. This means that they will only continue to be received by those in receipt of Pension Credit and other benefits. • The significant public concern about the impact of this change. Rising cost of living pressures have taken their toll in recent years, especially given the context of the numbers of older people left in a financially challenging and vulnerable position by the actions and management of the economy by the previous Conservative government. Government modelling estimates that the level of fuel poverty in 2024 will be 12.7%, whilst some estimates place the number of single pensioner households living in poverty between 20 and 23%. Age UK has suggested that at least 1.6 million pensioners living in poverty are not claiming eligible benefits, of which 1 million may currently be entitled to qualifying benefits but not claiming them. The position for our older residents is stark. • Many pensioners who would be eligible for pension credit do not currently claim it. Research suggests that this is both because potential claimants are unaware that they are eligible and, to a lesser but significant extent, because they can feel uncomfortable in claiming benefits. • The Energy Price Cap is due to rise by 10% in October, which makes it even more important that all residents are able to access all possible support available to them. <p>This Authority further notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The financial shock experienced as a result of the disastrous Truss-Kwarteng minibudget, and the significant budgetary pressures imposed on the incoming Labour Government as a result of the serial mismanagement of the UK economy, best characterised by that budget, And especially the £22bn black hole in our nation's finances, which is the context for the current chancellor's decision. • The Government's commitment to the pensions triple lock, which is expected to deliver an

	<p>increase of approximately £400 for those on the full new state pension.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The continuation of the £150 Warm Home Discount for low-income households from October and the extension of the Household Support Fund with £421 million, which can be used to ensure local authorities can support vulnerable people and families. • The low take up of Pension Credit with only 63% of those eligible nationwide receiving it – and over 880,000 pensioners not doing so. This Authority recognises the role we all have to play to increase awareness of benefits such as Pension Credit to ensure people get access to the support they are entitled to. • It is vital, therefore, that we all make every effort to help eligible pensioners claim pension credit and other allowances they may be entitled to both highlighting eligibility as well as challenging concerns around claiming entitlements. <p>This Authority resolves to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicly support and endorse the work of our relevant constituent councils in their awareness campaigns to maximise uptake of pension credits, encouraging them all to use the Low-Income Families Tracker (LIFT) to identify those who are eligible. • Request that the Mayor and all Board Members sign a joint letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, asking the government to ensure that vulnerable pensioners, particularly those who do not claim Pension Credit, are protected from fuel poverty as part of it Warm Homes Plan, as well as considering what support can be given to help people reduce their energy bills and consumption. • Commit the Authority to working collaboratively across in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to support residents during the cost of living crisis, as has recently happened in the Transport and Infrastructure Committee’s decision to extend of free travel for those with concessionary bus passes into peak hours from May 2025. • Encourage local efforts to promote, as the government has advised, Pension Credit uptake through constituent council services and partnerships with local charities and community organisations to ensure that all eligible pensioners in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough are supported in claiming their entitlement, and to be clear that there is no stigma in being in receipt of means-tested benefits
9	<p>Forward Plan</p>
	<p>It was resolved unanimously to:</p> <p>A Approve the Forward Plan for October 2024</p>
10	<p>Combined Authority Chief Executive Highlights Report</p>
	<p>The Chief Executive introduced the report and highlighted key points to members.</p> <p>Concerns were raised about the capacity requirements for the Local Growth Plan, with a query about options for collaborative solutions. Officers acknowledged the need to prioritise tasks to meet changing deadlines and mentioned ongoing work with the Government on interventions and opportunities. It was noted that the working group involves officers from the constituent councils, and that group will be reshaped as required as time goes on.</p> <p>It was resolved to:</p> <p>A Note the contents of the report.</p>
11	<p>Improvement Framework - Next Steps</p>
	<p>The Executive Director, Resources, presented the report and outlined key points to Members.</p> <p>During discussion, it was confirmed that the costs associated with the project would be covered by CPCA and LGA, assuming they remain minimal. Members expressed excitement at the progress on the devolution agenda, emphasising the importance of recognising achievements, crediting the Mayor and the officers for their work. The removal of the Best Value Notice was welcomed and the maintenance of ongoing support from the improvement board was agreed to be prudent. Questions were raised about capacity and priorities, with the need to embed improvements into business as usual emphasised. It was noted that MHCLG have expressed an interest in using the CPCA</p>

	<p>improvements as a learning tool for other areas. The important role of the LGA was stressed and there was a request to acknowledge that recognition in a letter to the LGA Chair.</p> <p>On being proposed by the Mayor, seconded by Councillor Bridget Smith, it was resolved to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Note the contents of the letter from Max Soule, Deputy Director, Local Government Intervention and Stewardship, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government B Recognise the progress that has been made and the work undertaken by staff, Elected Members, partners and agencies to address the areas of identified improvement C Note the close down arrangements for the current improvement programme (phase 3) D Note the proposed role for the Independent Advisory and Support Group (formerly the Independent Improvement Board) and the draft Terms of Reference E Agree the end date for the Independent Advisory and Support Group <p>[8 for, 0 against, 1 abstention]</p>
12	<p>Shared Ambition for Cambridgeshire & Peterborough</p>
	<p>Councillor Sarah Conboy, Lead Member for Devolution and Place introduced this agenda item, highlighting the importance of the journey as much as the document.</p> <p>The Director, Policy and Engagement, then presented the report and highlighted key points to members.</p> <p>Members discussed the importance of continued engagement and collaboration at various levels, emphasising the value of having all stakeholders involved. It was suggested to incorporate a set of metrics into the corporate performance report to track outcomes. The discussion highlighted the need for constructive challenges and cross-checks to ensure ongoing improvement and alignment with the corporate strategy.</p> <p>The conversation also touched on the significance of community land trusts and there was a request to amend an inaccurate statement within the document that refers to Cambridge CLT as the first in Cambridgeshire. Members raised the need for more ambitious transport solutions to address regional disparities. There was a call for greater recognition of local achievements and a push for more innovative and bold statements in future plans.</p> <p>On being proposed by Councillor Sarah Conboy, seconded by Councillor Jamil, it was resolved to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Note the significant engagement and work with partners and stakeholders across the region to develop the Shared Ambition for Cambridgeshire & Peterborough. B Approve the Shared Ambition for Cambridgeshire & Peterborough. C Approve the approach to the implementation and monitoring of delivery of the Shared Ambition. <p>[7 for, 0 against, 2 abstentions]</p>
13	<p>State of the Region</p>
	<p>The Head of Policy, Insight and Performance introduced the report and highlighted key points to members.</p> <p>During discussion, the importance of evidence-based policy making and the need for collective data analysis across different public sector services was highlighted. The value of understanding each other's data to achieve common goals was emphasised and the reopening of conversations on how to capture and analyse data collectively was suggested. The discussion highlighted the richness of data available, particularly in health economics and public health, and the need to pool resources to gain better insights.</p> <p>The conversation also touched on the practical applications of data, such as reducing knife crime and hospital admissions, and the importance of live data to inform ongoing discussions. There was a call to avoid duplication of studies and to ensure that data-driven decisions consider the entire region, not just specific areas.</p> <p>On being proposed by the Mayor, seconded by Councillor Conboy, it was resolved to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Approve the State of the Region 2024 Report and Dashboard as the Combined Authority's core evidence base, to inform all investment decisions, policy, strategy and business case

	<p>development.</p> <p>B Note State of the Region 2024 Summary Slides.</p> <p>C Note plans to strengthen the evidence base on an ongoing basis, including SOTR dashboard updates as new data becomes available, and an annual report.</p> <p>[6 for, 0 against, 3 abstentions]</p>
14	<p>Gateway Review Mid-Term Report</p> <p>The Head of Policy, Insight and Performance introduced the report and highlighted key points to members.</p> <p>It was resolved to:</p> <p>A Note the findings of the Ministry for Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) Gateway Review 2 (GR2) Mid-Term Report for the period 2020/21-2025/26.</p> <p>B Note how the Combined Authority is responding to themes from the Gateway Review 2 Mid-Term report.</p> <p>C Note planned next steps prior to submission of the GR2 Final Report in October 2025.</p>
15	<p>Greater South East Net Zero Hub Budgets</p> <p>The Executive Director, Place and Connectivity, introduced the report and highlighted key points to members.</p> <p>During discussion, members expressed their frustrations with the government's funding schemes, emphasising the need for more freedom to spend allocated money effectively locally. They discussed past failures in achieving targets nationally and the importance of learning from these experiences to avoid similar issues in the future. The conversation highlighted the challenges of working with challenging national criteria and the need for better evaluation and realistic planning when taking on new projects.</p> <p>The discussion also focused on the practical aspects of implementing schemes, including the effectiveness of different marketing strategies to reach households. There was a consensus on the need for personalised approaches, such as individual letters and door-knocking, over mass marketing and social media, which have higher dropout rates.</p> <p>On being proposed by Mayor, seconded by Councillor Bridget Smith, it was resolved to:</p> <p>A Agree the Home Upgrade Grant Phase Two (HUG2) and the Local Net Zero Accelerator (LNZA) Revised Budgets for 2024/25 set out in Table 1</p> <p>B Note the Revised Budgets for the projects set out in Table 2 agreed under the Executive Director of Place and Connectivity's delegated authority at the GSENZ Board meeting on 3rd September 2024</p> <p>C Agree the necessary revisions to the Combined Authority's Medium-Term Financial Plan</p> <p>[8 for, 0 against, 1 abstentions]</p>
16	<p>Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Business Growth Company Limited</p> <p>The Executive Director, Economy and Growth, presented the report and highlighted key points to members.</p> <p>On being proposed by the Mayor, seconded by Al Kingsley, it was resolved unanimously to:</p> <p>A Instruct officers to undertake the actions required to wind-up the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Business Growth Company Limited.</p> <p>B Appoint an additional director, Kate McFarlane, Director Policy and Engagement to the Board of the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Business Growth Company Limited in order to oversee and support the orderly closure of the company</p>
17	<p>Updates to the Constitution</p>
17a	<p>Proposed changes to Constitution to meet the requirements of the Procurement Act 2023</p> <p>The Director, Legal and Governance and Monitoring Officer introduced the report and highlighted key</p>

	<p>points to members.</p> <p>On being proposed by Mayor, seconded by Councillor Nethsingha, it was resolved to:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">A approve the attached changes to the Contract procedure Rules (CPR's) within the constitution which will become effective when the new legislation is implemented.</p> <p>[8 for, 0 against, 1 abstentions]</p>
18	<p>Recommendations from the Transport and Infrastructure Committee</p>
	<p>The Board was advised that the recommendations tabled had been unanimously supported by the Transport and Infrastructure Committee at its meeting on 18 September 2024.</p> <p>On being proposed by the Mayor, seconded by Councillor Jamil, it was resolved to approve the recommendations as set out below:</p>
18a	<p>New Digital Connectivity Strategy 2025-2029 KD2024/013</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">A approve the new Digital Connectivity Strategy 2025-2029</p> <p>[unanimous]</p>
18b	<p>Electric Vehicles</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">A approve the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Electric Vehicles Infrastructure Strategy</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">B note the progress on Electric Vehicles and Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) business case</p> <p>[7 for, 0 against, 2 abstentions]</p>
18c	<p>English National Concessionary Travel Scheme -Local Concession Proposal for pre 09.30 Bus Travel KD2024/046</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">A (using its powers as a local Travel Concession Authority) introduce a local concession allowing pre 9:30 travel for all passholders within the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Travel Concession Area from May 2025</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">B delegate authority to the Assistant Director for Transport (Public Transport Services) to engage with local operators from the date of decision through to May 2025 to ensure the new local concession is implemented for that date, providing updates to this committee.</p> <p>[8 for, 0 against, 1 abstention]</p>
18d	<p>Local Transport and Connectivity Plan and Associated Strategies</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">A delegate authority to the Assistant Director for Transport in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer to enter into one or more contracts with the relevant delivery body, as needed to continue the development of the LTCP sub strategies</p> <p>[7 for, 2 against, 0 abstentions]</p> <p>Note: approval of the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan and Associated Strategies required a vote in favour, by at least two thirds of all Members (or their Substitute Members) appointed by the Constituent Councils to include the Members appointed by Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council. The vote met those criteria.</p>

Chairman at the meeting on
Wednesday, 16 October 2024



Combined Authority Board

16 October 2024

Title:	Public and Member Questions
Public Report:	Yes

Question 1 – from Neil Mackay, local resident (asked on his behalf by William Bannell)

Question

I have here a copy of a letter from the Department of transport to the then Chief Executive of the Combined Authority Eileen Milner the letter is Dated 7th Jan 2022

The letter states that bus improvement funding to the tune of £4.29million would be provided in January 2022

The Letter states that ALL funding

-INCLUDING THIS FUNDING - will depend on your willingness to implement ambitious bus priority measures.

Later in the same paragraph it goes on to say 'In particular, the CPCA should commit to progress the reinstatement of the busgate on Mill Road, with access for Blue badge holders, as committed to by the Mayor in Late September.' (2021)

I went to Public questions at Cambridgeshire County Council recently and they informed me you had no power to make such a commitment

I am left thinking, the reason the legally quashed Mill Road Bridge TRO was so urgently relaunched and rushed through the County Council H&T committee, was because the bus funding grant money would need to be sent back to central government if the bridge failed to be closed.

I would like to know, why you made such a firm commitment to the Department of Transport? (ahead of any public consultation) Please could you explain?

RESPONSE:

I am able to confirm that no such commitment was made. There was press coverage of the meeting at the time on this, but no written communications have been identified. Mill Road was not discussed or minuted in any ZEBRA-related attended by Combined Authority officers with the DfT.

It is also important to reiterate that the Combined Authority does not hold authority over highway matters. As such, we appropriately refer such matters to the County Council (CCC), the Local Highways Authority responsible for such concerns.

The Combined Authority was the lead project sponsor for the project - i.e. the submission to central government was made via the Combined Authority through a partnership with other stakeholders. The Combined Authority and Greater Cambridge Partnership put forward a successful business case, submitted to the Department for Transport (DfT) in August 2021, for a grant of £4.295m to help fund the 30 buses. The grant represents 26% of the overall bus replacement project of over £16.5 million, with the balance being funded from the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority's Transforming Cities Fund, Greater Cambridge Partnership's City Deal and Stagecoach.

A supplementary question was asked why the Mill Road Bus Gate was so specifically mentioned in the letter. The Mayor confirmed that many things were discussed at the meeting but that as Mayor there is no way he could have made a commitment to implement the closure of Mill Road.

Question 2 – from Dr Graham Turnbull, local resident

Question

Achieving a balance between economic growth in the CPCA region and protection of the environment, particularly our water resources, is an unresolved challenge.

Alignment of infrastructure development and creation of additional housing and non-household developments to a single unified, coherent and realistic timeline is essential.

In the September the successful Darwin Green appeal (APP/W0530/W/23/3328390) the Secretary of State agreed with the Inspector's judgement that while the weight of evidence before the Inquiry suggests that abstraction pressure is contributing to ecological deterioration, there is insufficient evidence to fully understand the potential impact of the appeal development. She also agreed with the Inspector's judgement that the proposal would add to pressure on existing waterbodies and cumulatively add to any existing pressure on the ecology of Surface Water Bodies.

The Environment Agency Water resources 2023-2024: analysis of the water industry's annual water resources performance published 7 October 2024 listed additional water supplies to our region as 2030-2035 for the Grand Union water, 2035-2040 for Fen Reservoir and 2040-2050 for the Lincolnshire Reservoir. Proposed water saving measures have yet to produced recorded sustained reduction in consumption at domestic water meters.

Currently the region is depleting the aquifer to supply the current population and relief is a decade ahead.

The Mayor is overseeing continued economic growth in the Authority and Government promises increased devolved powers to support that growth, including infrastructure.

Do the Mayor and the Authority have the powers needed to reliably align the annual completion and occupation of new housing and non-housing developments with a water supply that is sufficient to avoid further ecological deterioration and arrest the continuing over-abstraction from the chalk aquifer?

RESPONSE:

Ensuring that there is a sufficient supply of water to meet forecasts needs in the CPCA area is a matter for water companies, DEFRA and the water regulator. The primary means by which water companies demonstrate to DEFRA and the (Environment Agency) that they will meet their obligations is through the Water Resources Management Plans (WRMP) that they publish every 5 years.

The recent planning decision made by the Secretary of State for Darwin Green in Cambridge, and decisions made by the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service on whether to approve a specific development consider the matter of water supply and environmental risks. The CPCA is not the Local Planning Authority for its area. However, together with the leaders in South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge City, I have pressed Ministers at every opportunity to ensure that the necessary new water supplies for Greater Cambridge, that allow reductions in levels of water abstraction from the aquifer, are secured as soon as possible.

The government have established a water scarcity group with the task of ensuring the delivery of the new supply and demand management measures. This multi-agency group, including the regulator and Environment Agency, are working together with the water industry and the Local Planning Authority, to explore ways in which water demand and the environmental objectives to reduce abstraction can be planned for and delivered.

At a strategic level, the CPCA is a member of Water Resources East, the multi-agency body that is exploring long term water management across East Anglia. Given the number of water companies and supply options that will be needed across the Region to address local demands in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, in my view it is at this level that appropriate strategic water planning must take place.

Meanwhile, the draft Water Resources Management Plan for Greater Cambridge is currently working its way through the process towards publication and approval. As Mayor, I continue to keep a close watch on both infrastructure needs and the environmental concerns affecting our area as I push for continued economic growth in the area. I have already commissioned an Infrastructure Delivery Framework Plan for the CPCA area that highlights water stress as a continuing issue. In my conversations with Government, I have also impressed upon Ministers, the need for growth in the CPCA area to be underpinned by sound environmental principles. The CPCA continues to support the water resources planning process across the whole of the area.

I therefore remain confident that the process will be able to provide a solution that reconciles pressure of water resources with our ambitions for the continued growth of the area.

A supplementary question was asked that given the importance of this issue why is it not mentioned in the State of the Region report? The Mayor confirmed that the issue has come up on many occasions in discussions around the State of the Region and the Shared Ambition; he offered a full written response on the matter. Dr Turnbull highlighted the recent moratorium issued on non-housing customers by Essex and Suffolk Water, centred around the town of Eye, for no increase in water consumption until 2033.

Question 3 – from Councillor Anna Bailey

Question

On 15th April this year Stagecoach cut the number of buses on the Number 9 bus route from Littleport to Ely to Cambridge from three buses to one, citing problems with commercial viability. From the same day Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) commissioned A2B to provide one additional bus to service the route. The effect of these changes is that the route has been operating with only two buses since 15th April on a reduced timetable, with a notable gap in service at peak times. This situation hasn't been helped by the fact that the CPCA, which is the Transport Authority, has declined my request to place bus timetables at the bus stops along the route; I am grateful to Stagecoach for agreeing to my request to do this instead.

The reduced timetable is not operating services at the times people want and need to travel. This is evident in the passenger usage data:

- In the 10 weeks prior to the reduction in service there were 32,249 passenger journeys, equating to 3,225 passenger journeys per week.*
- In the 15 weeks after the reduction in service there were 18,190 passenger journeys, equating to 1,213 passenger journeys per week.*

This represents an approximate 62.5% drop off in the number of passenger journeys on the Number 9 bus service since the cuts, at a time when the people of Littleport, Ely, Little Thetford and Stretham are paying a 200% increase in the Mayoral precept on their Council Tax bills for bus services.

This is a hugely regrettable and predicted loss of passengers on this route which will be hard to win back. This situation could have been avoided with:

- public engagement with users of the Number 9 in the run up to the changes*
- better timetabling of the second A2B bus commissioned by CPCA, based on feedback from residents and users of the service*
- commissioning of the third bus to provide better frequency*

Will the Mayor therefore urgently convene the long requested public meeting for users and potential users of the Number 9 bus service to establish what times people want to travel and will the Mayor commit to commissioning the third bus and tell residents of East Cambridgeshire when they can expect reinstatement of a full timetable on their Number 9 bus service?

RESPONSE:

Earlier this year, Stagecoach did cut the 9-bus service, citing non-commercial viability due to congestion and section 106 funding that had not yet been triggered. For the journeys that Stagecoach retained when cutting the service, they did also change the times of the journeys which made a like for like timetable, particularly in the morning peak extremely challenging to schedule.

Whilst Stagecoach did offer to support the 'co-design' of the timetable, lawyers advised not to allow a commercial operator to design a timetable that would go out to tender.

It is extremely unusual for a commercial operator to cut a service to such a degree whilst maintaining the most commercial journeys. Once CPCA understood the nature of the timings and changes that Stagecoach made (with 70 days notice) an accelerated procurement was undertaken to boost the service for April 14th based around filling in as many of the journeys as possible with an additional bus.

Integrated timetables were made available digitally, with Stagecoach supplying some information at bus stops with QR codes directing passengers online for further information. Officers are continuing to engage with Stagecoach and A2B as the operators of the commercial and contracted parts of the service on timetable information. It is also our understanding that Stagecoach and A2B continue to discuss a form of 'operator partnership' where A2B will operate the commercial part of the service on behalf of Stagecoach. Officers are awaiting a firm decision on this arrangement to implement next steps in boosting the service, subject to further procurement advice.

I appreciate that as with the 22 commercial bus services that were deregistered in 2022, the viability of operating commercial services in the current model of delivering bus services is challenging and places the CPCA in a very reactive situation to quickly find solutions to maintain stability for passengers.

I am pleased that the Combined Authority has been able to work with another local bus operator, Dews as part of the precept funded improvements to further boost services that serve Ely. Those improvements launched this week and include a new Zipper 3 service connecting Sutton and local villages into Ely as well as creating a new onward connection at Chatteris for travel through to Huntingdon. The Zipper 2 has also been extended to March, creating stronger links between March and Ely. Dews have worked with the Combined Authority to produce a new network map for those services which is available online.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Bailey reiterated the issue that the Stagecoach bus runs at 6.30am and then not again until 9.30 so there is no reasonably viable option for people starting work at 8.30 or 9. She repeated her question asking for the Mayor to convene the public meeting for users and potential users of the Number 9 bus service to establish a desired timetable, to commit to commissioning the third bus confirm when residents of East Cambridgeshire can expect reinstatement of a full timetable for the service? The Mayor confirmed that rural isolation and consequential inequalities are at the heart of Mayoral ambition. He reiterated there are ongoing discussions with officers and operators around an operator partnership. A full written response will be provided by officers.

Question 4 – from Councillor Anna Bailey

Question

It is incredibly disappointing to hear that the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) has been delayed...again.

CPCA is the responsible body for preparing the LNRS for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and has been given some £300,000 by the previous Government to deliver this important piece of work. CPCA has commissioned Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) to oversee its production.

Informally, work commenced at CCC in early 2022 with the appointment of a full time LNRS officer in November 2022, with an expectation that a draft strategy would take around 5 months to produce. This work has been beset by delays as well as management and governance issues.

Two years on and still we have no draft LNRS. At a recent meeting of the Steering Group all parties were agreed that the draft document is of such poor quality that it simply cannot be taken forward.

Two years on we have no draft document and there appears to be no plan to salvage the situation.

The failure to produce the strategy in a timely manner is having detrimental impacts. It is impeding East Cambs District Council's and other constituent Councils' ability to successfully implement biodiversity net gain efficiently, it is harming confidence in the farming community which desperately needs certainty, and simply, it is impeding the work needed to get on with delivering habitat and nature recovery in our county. This is a hugely regrettable and disappointing state of affairs.

Surely it is time, urgently, to find a competent body to carry out the work instead and to provide confidence to this Board and other interested parties that any newly agreed timeframe will actually be adhered to.

Will the Mayor and the CPCA be seeking a refund from Cambridgeshire County Council and, more importantly what is being doing to get this work back on track, when can the constituent councils expect to receive the completed and adopted LNRS and how can we be assured that it will actually happen?

RESPONSE:

The last Government commenced the process of seeking a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) through the 2021 Environment Act but the regulations and guidance to support the development of LNRS were only published in March 2023. The CPCA was subsequently formally appointed as the Responsible Authority on 30 June 2023, 16 months ago. Further guidance was still being published earlier this year by the previous Government in February 2024, 8 months ago.

A paper was provided to the Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee in June 2023 with a project plan that set out the intention to publish a strategy by March 2025. Ensuring continuing oversight, a further update was provided in November 2023 and in June 2024.

Initial conversations commenced in 2022 recognising the importance of LNRS by the CPCA, the Local Nature Partnership, Natural England and Cambridgeshire County Council. Informal conversations took place from summer 2022 and an LNRS Officer was appointed by CCC in December 2022. This period was used to discuss governance with relevant organisations including East Cambridgeshire District Council (Initially East Cambridgeshire DC did not join this Steering Group).

A draft strategy for consultation was never promised to be produced in 5 months. Indeed, it was advised by Defra/Natural England at the time (published on the LGA [website](#)) that 'LNRSs are expected to take 12-18 months to be prepared and published'.

It is noted that unfortunately, as was reported, there was some sickness within the team at CCC but is not considered that the LNRS wasnt delayed considerably compared to initial estimates.

Draft chapters of the LNRS have been shared throughout the process with the first one being shared in February 2024. As such, a draft LNRS does exist, and the supporting mapping is in the latter stages having been shared with the Ecologist Group on Friday 11 October and was shared again with the steering group on 15th October

The complexity of the issues and the interdependencies with land ownership, planning and implementation do need more work and so the Steering Group on 15th has focussed on agreeing actions that need to be achieved to review and revise the critical path for the consultation and approval of the LNRS in 2025. This includes ensuring alignment and that it is fit for purpose given the forecast growth from Government.

The LNRS was always intended to be published in 2025. It is unclear how this is impeding ECDC's ability to successfully implement biodiversity net gain. All local planning authorities nationally are in the same position as no responsible authority has yet published a LNRS.

As already highlighted, the responsible authority and supporting authorities are working collaboratively to ensure the LNRS is completed in 2025. A workshop with the steering group took place yesterday to take stock of progress to date, present the initial mapping outputs and to collectively agree the next steps that are required. We all recognise the importance of getting the document right (noting that once published the document won't be updated again for between three and ten years as directed by the Secretary of State).

We will not be asking for a refund as we are focussed on working together to get this project done. The representative of the Environment Agency said yesterday at the Steering Group that every LNRS process has experienced some tricky periods as it is about 'breaking new ground' but that they were supportive and welcomed the collaborative approach being taken in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. To ensure oversight the Executive Director is now attending the Steering Group and each Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee will receive an update or decision making report into 2025.

In a supplementary question Councillor Bailey asked for an expected delivery date, noting that some of the documents are very underdeveloped. A lot of money has been spent; she enquired whether the County Council would need more funding to complete the work. The Mayor confirmed that the goal is to complete the work professionally by the end of 2025. A full written response will be provided by officers.

UPDATE: At the meeting of the Combined Authority Board on 13 November 2024, a point of clarity was made by the Mayor that, in June 2023, the target date of the LNRS approval was November 2024, not March 2025 as stated. For clarity therefore, 2025 was not always the target date for completion.

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