



# Combined Authority Board

**4 September 2024**

Title:	Improvement Plan Update
Report of:	Angela Probert, Interim Programme Director, Transformation
Lead Member:	Mayor
Public Report:	Yes
Key Decision:	No
Voting Arrangements:	To note

## Recommendations:

A	Note the Best Value Notice issued in January 2024 for six months has lapsed
B	Note the progress made across the Improvement Plan throughout June and July 2024
C	Note the outcome of the Internal Audit review on the 'Embedding Continuous Change'

## 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 identified improvements set out in this report to meet concerns of Best Value Notice received in January 2024 and proposed ongoing arrangements will support the Combined Authority achieve Best Value and enable the delivery of agreed priorities and objectives.

## 1. Purpose

1.1	This report provides the Combined Authority Board with an opportunity to reflect on the progress made by the Combined Authority in June and July 2024 to address the key areas of concern set out in the Best Value Notice dated January 2024
-----	---

## 2. Proposal

2.1	<p>The Combined Authority is waiting on a letter from the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), regarding whether a new Best Value Notice will be reissued to replace the Notice that expired at the end of July 2024.</p>
2.2	<p><b>Overall progress in June / July</b></p> <p>The overall progress across the Improvement plan continues to be <b>Green</b> with the majority of activities planned for the period up to the end of July now completed.</p> <p>June saw continued focus on the Improvement Plan whilst being mindful of the election period restrictions. Work continued at pace on the State of the Region and Shared Ambitions work:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. All Committee Member Workshop – 13 June 2024</li><li>2. State of the Region and Shared Ambition Working Group – 17 June 2024</li><li>3. Shared Ambitions workshop 3 for Board and CEXs – 27 June 2024</li><li>4. Shared Ambition Stakeholder Workshop 3 – 08 July 2024</li></ol> <p>The output from the workshops has fed into the first draft of the Shared Ambition Framework. This has been shared with partners for feedback and was reviewed as part of the third Stakeholder Workshop on 8 July 2024.</p> <p>The embedding of the Single Assurance Framework (SAF) is ongoing with dates confirmed for the Investment Panel and Investment Committee now agreed.</p> <p>Risk training has been concluded across the organisation and the new online system is in place and being used.</p> <p>The Combined Authority continues to collate evidence of the work being carried out on the Improvement Plan and this is presented to the Independent Improvement Board at each meeting.</p> <p>Set out below is a summary of the activity delivered against the Improvement Plan for each improvement theme and detailed in the Improvement Plan highlight report attached as Appendix 1.</p>
2.3	<p><b>Continue to implement and monitor cultural change across the organisation, for both officers and members, with a focus on measurable outcomes (Green)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In July, we reviewed feedback from the CIVIL staff awards event and the Communications Team also measured engagement with the event on LinkedIn. This is the most successful HR event we have held to date, (1/4 of all staff posted about the event). It has boosted the combined authority's reputation on social media and helped to promote our CPCA Employer Brand.</li><li>• LEAP appraisals have continued into June and July (97% completion rate regarding looking back paperwork received, and 92% completion rate looking forward paperwork received). The feedback contained within the appraisals will be used to inform scheduling and content for staff training and development sessions. We have started reviewing the requests, alongside identifying organisation-wide training needs.</li><li>• The second and third Senior Leadership Team Network meetings took place on 3rd June and 11th July respectively. These were well attended and Terms of Reference for the meeting were agreed as planned with future meetings now diarised and due to take place monthly.</li><li>• Place and Connectivity Away Day was held on 11 June with a focus on the staff survey, collaboration and embedding the Directorate Business Plans into future looking LEAPs.</li><li>• Building on the May workshop of Place Directors a paper to Public Service Board about how the constituent authorities place directors work better together for the benefit of the area was developed for the 18 July meeting.</li><li>• Induction and training sessions to support Members in their roles have commenced and these have been well attended.</li><li>• LGA/IIB activity with Combined Authority Board members continues.</li></ul>

2.4	<p><b>Commit, through strong partnership working at both officer and member level, to develop the strategic priorities and aspirations for the area that will benefit local residents, and a credible delivery strategy for progressing these (Green)</b></p> <p>Shared Ambition:</p> <p>A decision has been made to change the delivery of the Ambition document from September to October CPCA Board to ensure a link with the development of the Growth Plan.</p> <p>The following workshops were delivered across June and July:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All Committee Member Workshop – 13 June 2024 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– A two hour in person All-Committee Member Workshop. Excluding CPCA staff, there were 16 attendees, consisting of members from the Combined Authority Thematic Committees, Business Board and Overview &amp; Scrutiny.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• State of the Region &amp; Shared Ambition Working Group – 17 June 2024 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– A two hour in person Feedback Session was run with the members of the State of the Region &amp; Shared Ambition Working Group. This is a working group that helped to co-produce the initial scope of work and have supported delivery throughout. The purpose of the session was to test the emerging outputs and outcomes with the group.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Shared Ambitions workshop 3 for Board &amp; CEXs – 27 June 2024 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– This two hour in person workshop was the third time that Board Members, Chief Executives and the Combined Authority Corporate Management Team came together to continue the journey towards developing our shared ambitions for the region.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• First of two resident focus groups held – 28 June 2024 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The outputs have fed into the first draft of the Shared Ambition Framework. This has been shared with partners for feedback and is to be reviewed as part of the third Stakeholder Workshop on 08 July.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Shared Ambition Stakeholder Workshop 3 – 8 July 2024 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– This workshop was attended by over 60 delegates and is the third and final workshop that seeks to bring together stakeholders from a broad range of sectors. This was an interactive workshop opened by Mayor Dr Nik Johnson and Cllr Sarah Conboy, Lead Member for Devolution &amp; Place, and Prior + Partners facilitated the session. The outcomes included testing the outcomes and commitments in the framework and brainstorm long-term and short-term building blocks.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• UKREiiF &amp; Investment Prospectus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Complete</li> </ul> </li> <li>• State of the Region <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The substantive draft has been shared with the technical group, working group, scrutiny committee, CEXs and Board Members for feedback. Helpful feedback received which is being considered. The development of the accompanying animation for the project is underway.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Infrastructure Delivery Framework <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The Environment &amp; Sustainable Communities Committee in July will receive a progress report. The Draft report is having additional review following technical comments from the Place Directors review.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
2.5	<p><b>Continue to implement and embed the changes agreed by the Combined Authority Board as part of the improvement plan (Green)</b></p> <p>The position remains positive, with continuing progress to further improve and strengthen processes, procedures, reporting and documentation with clear signs of embedding good practice across the organisation supported through training. The Single Assurance Framework has gone live, and the Investment Panel has met on several occasions as part of the planned governance; with the Investment Committee scheduled for the end of August. Work is ongoing regarding the development of the Single</p>

Project Register and the refresh of the monitoring and evaluation framework, helping to inform future investment and decision making.

There is good engagement from officers, partners, elected members and other stakeholders as evidenced by the participation in the shared ambition work across the region.

The Internal Audit Review undertaken by RSM in June 2024 to review embedding continuous improvement gave 'substantial assurance' to the arrangements in place and confirmed:

- that the Authority has well established governance arrangements for monitoring progress and slippage against the Phase Two Improvement Plan, including embedding actions into DBPs, escalating issues and identifying further improvement(s). It was also identified that the Combined Authority has in place a Continuous Improvement Project Plan that included a specific timeline of tasks to support the embedding of the Phase Two Improvement Plan actions. It was also noted that the Authority completed Learning Excellence Achievement Performance (LEAP) appraisal reviews for the year 2024/25 which included SMART objectives in relation to the improvement plan being assigned to each member of staff involved in the improvement.
- through sample testing of 10 actions stated as 'closed' from the Phase Two Workstream that all ten were completed. This included reviewing the CPCA's approved Constitution (November 2023), revised Officer and Member protocols, support guidance for the new governance structure, and the Terms of Reference of the Investment Committee and Panel. The presentation and discussion of the Q1 and Q2 Corporate Performance Report were confirmed through the CPCA Board minutes from September and November 2023.
- that the Corporate Management Team was presented with updates on the Departmental Business Plans (DBP) on a weekly basis and confirmed actions from the 2023/24 Improvement Plan Internal audits have been completed in line with timescales prescribed.
- Phase Two Improvement Plan
  - Roles and responsibilities were documented within the Roles and Responsibility Document and the Terms of References of each workstreams. It was confirmed the Phase Two Improvement Plan was fully complete with owners identified for actions with due dates and there was no overdue actions. Six actions were monitored to completion through DBPs, which included business as usual activities such as having an agreed overarching Corporate Strategy and Resourcing Plan.
  - Through sample testing of 10 actions from the Phase Two Improvement Plan marked as 'complete', it was confirmed that all cases the actions had been completed. Given the nature of some of the actions, it has been difficult to conclude that they have been fully embedded, but we can clearly see early positive signs of completion, and a firm focus on ensuring these actions become and remain embedded. We also confirmed that six actions from Phase Two had transferred onto the Authority's Phase Three Improvement Plan and the Phase Three plan included issues which was documented on the Best Value Notice 2024.
  - Staff directly involved in the Improvement Plan have objectives related to the Improvement Plan within their LEAP Appraisals.
- Directorate Business Plans (DBPs)
  - Confirmed all 16 actions from the Phase Two Improvement Plan were included in DBPs and were SMART. Through review of five sets of minutes from the Corporate Management Team (CMT), we confirmed that in each case the CMT was presented with updates on the DBPs. It was noted that the updates provided insight into the journey that the Authority was on and any progress that had been made since the previous meeting which included updates from each Directorate.
- Governance
  - Confirmed governance and reporting of the improvement plan was effective and updates were provided with sufficient discussion, challenge and scrutiny from the following :
    - Improvement Group
    - IIB

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audit and Governance Committee</li> <li>• Overview and Scrutiny Committee</li> <li>• Board</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management Actions Follow Up <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– All actions from 2023/24 Improvement Plan related audits (Governance and Project Planning and Delivery) demonstrated action completion.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
--	--

### 3. Background

3.1	The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority was issued with a Best Value Notice in January 2023 for a period of 12 months included the concerns identified in the External Auditors letter dated June 2022.
3.2	<p>A further Best Value Notice was issued in January 2024 and whilst it acknowledged the steps the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) had taken to address the serious issues identified, and the constructive engagement with the Independent Improvement Board and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, it also recognised the Authority had more work to do to ensure effective partnership working between all levels of the Combined Authority and its constituent authorities, to enable the area to achieve its full potential.</p> <p>A further Improvement Plan (phase 3) was developed and agreed by the Combined Authority Board in March 2024.</p> <p>Progress against the outcomes set out in the Improvement Plan have been reported to the Combined Authority Board, Audit and Governance Committee, Overview and Scrutiny Committee and also the Independent Improvement Board.</p> <p>Regular updates on progress and evidence of impact are also provided to the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (formally known as Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) by the Chief Executive and Chair, Independent Improvement Board.</p>

### 4. Appendices

4.1	Appendix A – Highlight report June / July 2024
-----	--

### 5. Implications

Financial Implications	
5.1	<p>The 24/25 budget for the Improvement Plan was set to cover the costs of the Improvement Board for the full financial year, giving the flexibility for the Combined Authority to continue engaging the Board’s support if required or desired.</p> <p>As part of the Medium-Term Financial Plan process Directors are reviewing the responsibilities and expectations of the services within their areas and so any financial implications arising from the improvement work, and delivery of best value, into Business as Usual will be incorporated within the proposed draft budget presented to the November Combined Authority Board.</p>
Legal Implications	
5.2	<p>The Local Government Act 1999 (amended to apply to Combined Authorities) (“the statute”) requires the Combined Authority to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.</p> <p>The statute allows the Secretary of State to intervene when it is considered that the duty is not being met. However, it was made clear in the notification letter (from the Secretary of State) confirming the imposition of the notice, that the notice issued to the Combined Authority was outside of those powers.</p>

	As referred to in the main body of the report, the notice expired at the end of July 2024. Should there be further correspondence from the Secretary of State in relation to the notice (for example, extension, amendment or revocation of the notice) the Combined Authority may need to consider further actions as appropriate and that may include decisions such as amending the terms of reference for the Improvement Board. Accordingly, further reports to the Board or other Committee focussing specifically on best value requirements will be brought when appropriate to do so.
Public Health Implications	
5.3	None
Environmental & Climate Change Implications	
5.4	None
Other Significant Implications	
5.5	None
Background Papers	
5.6	<a href="#">Best Value Notice January 2023</a> <a href="#">Best Value Notice January 2024</a> <a href="#">Combined Authority Board report October 2022</a> <a href="#">Combined Authority Board report March 2023</a> <a href="#">Combined Authority Board report March 2024</a>