

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Independent Support and Advisory Group (Revised) Terms of Reference

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Improvement Board was established by the Combined Authority Board in October 2022 to provide challenge and support for the issues identified in the Improvement Framework report presented to the Combined Authority Board on 27 July 2022.

The Combined Authority was issued with a Best Value Notice on 24 January 2023 for a period of 12 months and the identified issues to be addressed were a focus for the Independent Improvement Board, alongside the concerns identified in the External Auditors letter dated June 2022.

A further Best Value Notice was issued in January 2024 for a period of six months. A review of the Board arrangements was undertaken in February 2024 to reflect the extended period for the Best Value Notice. The revised arrangements were agreed by the Independent Improvement Board and CA Board in March 2024.

‘After Best Value’

The Best Value Notice issued in January 2024 ceased on 31 July 2024. A letter has been received from the Ministry that identifies that no further Best Value Notice is to be issued at this time.

The letter recognises the progress made by CPCA since January 2024, including continuing to deliver and update its improvement plan, making further permanent appointments to bolster the senior leadership team, embedding positive changes relating to culture and governance across the organisation and starting to monitor the longer-term impacts of those changes. It welcome comments from the independent Improvement Board that it is “encouraged by the increasing engagement of the constituent authorities and partners” in ongoing work to develop a set of strategic ambitions for the region and a plan to deliver them. It also recognises the authority’s constructive engagement with both the Improvement Board and the department throughout the process of the Notices.

Looking forward, the letter sets out that the CPCA needs to sustain its improvement journey, further embed change and continue to strive for strong partnership working across all levels of the combined authority and its constituent authorities. It also sets out that refining the strategic ambitions for the region and an associated delivery plan remains an important area of work to enable the area to achieve its full potential for the benefit of residents, and effective partnership working is key to this.

The department will continue to review CPCA’s progress and, as part of this will continue to engage with the CPCA over at least the next six months. During this time, further updates to Ministers will be provided on progress.

It is recognised the importance of maintaining the Improvement Board until January 2025.

The Combined Authority recognises the continuous improvement journey it is on driven by the ethos ‘Better never stops’. The focus however will be driven by issues identified internally rather than formal external notifications of concern.

The contribution of the members of the Independent Improvement Board over the last 18 months has been very much recognised and valued. The experience and relationships the Board members bring will support the ongoing development of the Combined Authority and it is proposed that the Board is retained; be it in a revised form, over the next six months.

It is proposed that the Board’s focus and remit is shifted to offer support and advice.

Set out below is the proposed revised Terms of Reference.

1. Purpose

The purpose of the Independent Support and Advisory Group is:

- To provide external advice, support, challenge and expertise to Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority on:
 - Preparations for the new Mayoral term
 - Harnessing the opportunities for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, including through the development of a delivery plan and mechanisms in support of the approved Shared Ambition, taking account of the links with Devolution and Local Growth Plans
 - Supporting Members of the Combined Authority Board to operate in a collegiate and collaborative manner in line with the CIVIL values
 - Confirming evidence of continued improvement
- To identify and share learning and best practice with Members and Officers on all activities included in the Authority's Improvement Plan, including identification of development opportunities for both members and officers.

2. Accountability

- A work programme will be agreed and commissioned to guide the activity and contribution of the Independent Support and Advisory Group.
- The Independent Support and Advisory Group will be accountable Through the Chief Executive and engage as agreed; through informal and formal means.

3. Membership

The membership of the Independent Support and Advisory Group:

- The current members of the Independent Improvement Board will form the Independent Support and Advisory Group.
- Changes to membership can be agreed by the Independent Support and Advisory Group.

4. Working arrangements:

- The Group may engage with those it believes will be useful in delivering its work programme; and in consultation with the Chief Executive.
- Any costs associated with the Group will be met by Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority and the Local Government Association.

5. Independent Support and Advisory Group meetings:

It is proposed that the Group will be in place until May 2025. The Group will meet on a quarterly basis (November 2024, January 2025, March 2025 and May 2025)

- Group members will provide an update on interactions with Members and officers of the CPCA.

Independent Support and Advisory Group Terms of reference September 2024

- The Chief Executive will update the Group on matters pertinent to the focus by the Group.
- An agenda pack and update from the Chief Executive will be circulated in advance of each meeting.
- Discussion and interaction during the Group meetings will be private to allow and enable constructive dialogue; officers and members being treated with respect and courtesy.
- Any agenda for the meeting in advance will be agreed between the Chair and Chief Executive.
- A formal note of the meeting will be taken
- A note from the Chair will be circulated following each meeting

6. Venue for meetings

To be agreed

7. Review

These Terms of Reference will be reviewed in February 2025.