



Combined Authority Board

16 October 2024

Title:	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:	Simple majority

Recommendations:

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 development.
B	Note State of the Region 2024 Summary Slides.
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.

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 delivery of the SOTR 2024 evidence base and dashboard that will inform future investment decisions, policy, strategy and business case development is a key activity identified within the 2023-25 Corporate Strategy.

1. Purpose

1.1	The purpose of SOTR24 is to enable the Combined Authority and our partners to better understand the current and potential future state of our region. It will give a clear sense of areas we need to prioritise, underpinning co-ordinated policy and strategy development. Early findings have already informed the development of the long-term Shared Ambition for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough as a place. SOTR24 will provide robust evidence for our positioning with government, Local Growth Plan, deepening devolution and inward investment proposals. The primary objective of SOTR24 is to create
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	a relevant, reliable and accessible evidence base. As such, the review does not make policy recommendations as these are out of scope.
1.2	Section 2 of this paper sets out the outputs of SOTR24.
1.3	Section 3 describes how the evidence base has been co-produced with partners.
1.4	Section 4 describes plans for disseminating the findings.
1.5	Section 5 describes the handover process to enable future updates to be undertaken in-house.
1.6	Section 6 outlines plans for future improvement of the evidence base.

2. Outputs and purpose

2.1	<p>The SOTR24 report, slides and dashboard present an overview of the present economic, socio-economic and environmental state of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough region, with key findings and a detailed analysis of 140 indicators grouped into eight themes. The report also presents an analysis through the lens of the “stubborn challenges and threats” identified in the Combined Authority’s Economic Growth Strategy 2022, and a new holistic model for understanding lived experience across the region, called ‘Portraits’. Key findings are presented in a summary slide pack, report chapter summaries and a dashboard guided walkthrough. The interactive dashboard enables users to build their own analyses in chart, tabular or map form.</p> <p>Themes</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Place 2. Business & Enterprise 3. Workforce, Jobs & Skills 4. Health & Wellbeing 5. Wildlife & Nature 6. Net Zero & Climate Resilience 7. Tackling Inequality 8. Connectivity
2.2	<p>The completed project objectives 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

3. Co-production with stakeholders

3.1	SOTR24 has been co-produced with a broad range of partners, who have worked together throughout the project in two working groups, to co-design and co-produce the review.
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	<p>SOTR Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cambridge Ahead • Cambridge City Council • Cambridge Council for Voluntary Service • Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Integrated Care System • Cambridgeshire Acre • Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust • Cambridgeshire County Council • Centre for Business Research (CBR) • East Cambridgeshire District Council • Fenland District Council • Greater Cambridge Partnership • Greater Cambridge Shared Planning • Huntingdonshire District Council • Office for National Statistics • Peterborough City Council • South Cambridgeshire District Council • University of Cambridge • Voluntary Community Action East Cambridgeshire
3.2	The State of the Region and Shared Ambition Working Group has met monthly, with the remit of acting as a sounding board and critical friend to the Technical and Engagement Working Groups, including identifying interdependencies and opportunities between these projects and other work.
3.3	The Technical Working Group has met monthly and sometimes fortnightly, with the remit to provide technical advice and expertise to aid the development of the SOTR24 project.
3.4	Broader stakeholder engagement has included Members, local government officers, community leaders and academics and has comprised 16 insight interviews, 4 interim report consultation sessions, 5 dashboard testing sessions and 4 final report consultation sessions.
3.5	Over 500 comments on the draft report and dashboard were received from stakeholders, logged and responded to by email or in individual meetings. Where red lines were flagged, they have been resolved through discussion. Feedback topics ranged from the choice of data sources and comparators and the accuracy of the insight, to missing content and accessibility. Where relevant, amendments have been made. Some of the feedback will be considered for SOTR 25 due to capacity constraints or was out of scope for this piece of work.
3.6	SOTR24's approach to stakeholder engagement has been recognised as leading best practice nationally, with a request to share our learning with the Office for National Statistics. The Combined Authority has also been invited to the inaugural UK Statistics Assembly event in January 2025; an opportunity for users and producers of statistics to come together to discuss and advise the UK Statistics Authority on the priorities, user needs and gaps for the country's statistics.

4. Plans for disseminating the findings

4.1	<p>Communications</p> <p>A communications campaign will highlight the successes of SOTR24 while effectively conveying the key findings from its analysis. A multimodal approach will be used to maximize reach and engagement, employing a diverse mix of content, frequency, and activities. This will range from social media posts to article coverage and be visually engaging to ensure sustained interest throughout the campaign.</p>
4.2	<p>Road Show</p>

	All engagement groups will be offered the opportunity to receive a presentation on the findings of the SOTR24 analysis. These presentations will be tailored to the audience, delivered both virtually and in person across various locations, and can cover either all SOTR24 themes or specific themes of interest. The roadshow will aim to ensure stakeholders have a clear understanding of the findings and recommendations from the SOTR24 report, fostering ongoing engagement and feedback.
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5. Handover and lessons learnt

5.1	<p>Handover</p> <p>All SOTR24 data will be handed over to the Combined Authority with both in-depth training and procedure documentation provided. A database of data source links to each of the 140 SOTR24 indicators will be included. This will futureproof annual updates to be undertaken in-house.</p>
5.2	<p>Lessons Learned</p> <p>A comprehensive lessons learned exercise will be undertaken, which will provide Chief Executives and stakeholders who have contributed to the SOTR24 working groups with the opportunity to share their reflections on what went well and what could be improved. This will capture and document the learning from the SOTR24 project to enhance future iterations. The lessons learned feedback loop plays a vital role in embedding learning to drive continuous improvement.</p>

6. Plans for future iterations

6.1	The SOTR report will be refreshed annually, and the dashboard will be updated on an ongoing basis when new data is available. Future iterations of SOTR will present opportunities to respond to more of the suggestions and questions that could not be included in SOTR24 due to resource constraints.
6.2	During the final stages of the SOTR24 report and dashboard production, stakeholder feedback pertaining to possible further development for SOTR25 was collated and codified. This feedback will be used as the springboard toward the formulation of SOTR25:
6.3	<p>Protected Characteristic Insights</p> <p>Few datasets used in SOTR allowed disaggregation to protected characteristics. Engagement with data providers (e.g. ONS, Nomis) could highlight the importance of this disaggregation. A targeted local survey could provide further insights.</p>
6.4	<p>Use of Comparators</p> <p>A more comprehensive comparison against other Combined Authorities and a greater range of international comparator data could be included.</p>
6.5	<p>Wildlife & Nature</p> <p>Primary research could be undertaken to expand the insights on the Wildlife & Nature theme.</p>
6.6	<p>Forecasting</p> <p>There is potential to include forecasts for additional data sets, in particular if based around scenarios.</p>
6.7	<p>Portraits</p> <p>The concept of looking at C&P through lived experience portraits could be explored and progressed further.</p>
6.8	<p>Restricted Data</p> <p>There is potential for partners to collectively procure licenses to publicly-owned datasets that have access restrictions, in order for these data to be included in SOTR.</p>
6.9	<p>Additional indicators</p> <p>The indicator set will likely evolve over time to continue to align with Combined Authority's and partners' needs and priorities.</p>

7. Background

7.1	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”.
7.2	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.”
7.3	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.
7.4	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.
7.5	In September 2023, CA adopted a new Single Assurance Framework. This contained the commitments that “The Strategic Planning Process is evidence based through a regularly updated State of the Region assessment...Regional evidence base identifies issues/ opportunities/need in order to inform considerations...Business Cases will require detailed evidence.”
7.6	City Science were appointed as consultants to the project in November 2023, following an open competitive procurement process.
7.7	In March 2024, at a Shared Ambition Stakeholder Workshop was attended by 80 delegates from a broad range of sectors, including CA Members, City Science shared emerging insights from State of the Region.
7.8	In March 2024, Overview and Scrutiny Committee and CA Board noted and commented on progress to develop the 2024 State of the Region review.
7.9	In May 2024, Members attended a State of the Region workshop to introduce the findings and ensure that the insights provided by the report and dashboard meet user needs.

8. Appendices

8.1	Appendix A. State of the Region 2024 Report
8.2	Appendix B. State of the Region 2024 Summary Slides
8.3	Appendix C. Link to dashboard State of The Region 2024 Dashboard

9. Implications

Financial Implications

9.1	There are no new financial commitments from this report. Where there are costs associated with plans for future improvement, partner contributions will be sought to match funds already in the MTFP.
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Legal Implications

9.2	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	
9.3	State of the Region 2024 contains evidence about the health and wellbeing of the region that will be used to inform strategic decisions. One of the core themes is health and wellbeing.
Environmental & Climate Change Implications	
9.4	State of the Region 2024 is anticipated to lead to better decision making around achievement of the national statutory requirement of Net Zero emissions and delivery of local targets and strategies.
Other Significant Implications	
9.5	None
Background Papers	
9.6	None