



COMBINED AUTHORITY BOARD

WEDNESDAY, 22 JANUARY 2025

Venue:	The Maltings, Ship Lane, Ely, CB7 4BB	
Time:	10.00 am – 2.26 pm	
Present:	Dr Nik Johnson Councillor Anna Bailey Councillor Chris Boden Councillor Sarah Conboy Councillor Dennis Jones Councillor Lucy Nethsingha Councillor Anna Smith Councillor Bridget Smith Nitin Patel John O'Brien	Mayor East Cambridgeshire District Council Fenland District Council Huntingdonshire District Council Peterborough City Council Cambridgeshire County Council Cambridge City Council South Cambridgeshire District Council Vice Chair of Business Board Integrated Care Board
Apologies	Councillor Edna Murphy Al Kingsley	Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority Chair of Business Board

Minutes

	<p><i>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.</i></p> <p>Note: the items were taken in the following order: 1-8, 10-11, 9, 12-14.</p>
1	Apologies for Absence
	Apologies were received from Al Kingsley (with Nitin Patel substituting) and from Councillor Edna Murphy.
2	Minutes of the previous meetings
	The minutes of the meetings on 13 November 2024 and 13 December 2024 were approved as an accurate record and signed by the Mayor. The action log was noted.
3	Declaration of Interests
	Councillor Chris Boden declared an interest as a trustee of FACT Community Transport.
4	Announcements
	No announcements were made.
5	Public Questions
	No public questions were received.
6	Petitions
	No petitions were received.
7	Forward Plan
	It was resolved unanimously to: A Approve the Forward Plan for January 2025

8	<p>Combined Authority Membership Update</p>
	<p>The Board received a report outlining changes to the membership of board and committees of the Combined Authority.</p> <p>It was resolved to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Note the temporary change in substitute member from East Cambridgeshire District Council on the Combined Authority’s Audit and Governance Committee at the 28 November 2024 meeting. B Note the temporary change in substitute member from Peterborough City Council on the Combined Authority Board at the 13 December 2024 meeting. C Note the change in substitute appointments from Huntingdonshire District Council on the Combined Authority’s Environment and Sustainable Communities, and Skills and Employment Committees. D Note the appointment of substitute member from Cambridge City Council on the Combined Authority’s Audit and Governance Committee. E Note the temporary change in substitute member from Cambridge City Council on the Combined Authority’s Skills and Employment Committee at the 20 January 2025 meeting.
9	<p>Combined Authority Chief Executive Highlights Report</p>
	<p>The Chief Executive introduced the report, emphasising the importance of understanding the timing and legislative requirements of the white paper. The scope within the budget allows for necessary adjustments, and updates will be provided to the board. Work on the spending review and Local Growth Plan (LGP) is ongoing, focusing on new burdens funding and key regional projects like the Ely Junction. All Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs) are awaiting a remit letter in February to guide their efforts.</p> <p>Homes England's Strategic Partnership Programme (SPP) is expected to receive official sign-off soon, with governance structures being established to identify opportunities. The local visitor economy partnership is being developed in collaboration with Visit England, as Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is one of very few areas in the country which does not have one.</p> <p>The parliamentary event for the launch of UKREiiF is scheduled for Monday, with high attendance expected. This event is part of the preparation for UKREiiF in May, highlighting the importance of investing in the region and linking to the LGP.</p> <p>Concerns were raised about the Greater Cambridge Transport Strategy's timeline, with a draft document expected in the summer and consultation in the autumn. The complexity and challenges of the strategy were acknowledged, and assurances were sought regarding adequate resourcing to address these issues, as well as engagement with wider stakeholders. Officers confirmed the work is being undertaken by the Greater Cambridgeshire Partnership (GCP) team with direction from a senior officer steering group and members group. Officers are very aware of the milestones around the Local plan and will ensure the correct resource is in place at the various stages in order for milestones to be achieved. An update is being taken to the meeting of the Transport and Infrastructure Committee later this week, with a further update expected in March, which can include an engagement plan.</p> <p>Members requested more detail regarding the Tiger on Demand figures, with a breakdown to include the number of actual passenger journeys and a definition of a “trip”. Officers confirmed this data is going to be regularly reported to the Transport and Infrastructure Committee as well as the Board so more information will be included going forward.</p> <p>Discussions also covered the impact of potential changes in local government reorganisation, with a focus on maintaining effective decision-making and collaboration among constituent councils. The importance of clear communication, data sharing, and finding positive outcomes was emphasised.</p> <p>It was resolved to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Note the contents of the report
10	<p>Mayor's Budget</p>
	<p>The Mayor presented the proposed budget for the financial year 2025/26, taking the opportunity to clarify that the £1.59 million within the budget for “Election Costs” is for the democratic process of undertaking the mayoral election, not for the Mayor's campaign. He also confirmed that the budget for</p>

conference attendance has not been utilised during his tenure and suggested that it may be removed in the future.

Councillor Chris Boden raised concerns about the mayoral precept for bus services, particularly in Fenland, where bus services have deteriorated. The Mayor acknowledged the challenges but highlighted CPCA efforts to save and improve bus routes, including new proposed routes and procurement processes. He emphasised that while there have been setbacks, there have also been substantive improvements.

While expressing her support for freezing the mayoral precept, Councillor Anna Bailey noted the failure to deliver all the promised bus services. She highlighted the frustration of residents who have been paying the increased precept without seeing the expected improvements. She called for better allocation of subsidies and more effective use of public funds. Officers confirmed that work is ongoing to develop a timetable for the number 9 bus route, with further investment planned; explaining the complexities of maintaining bus services and the need for public intervention.

Voicing support of the budget, Councillor Lucy Nethsingha acknowledged the challenges of setting council tax but emphasised the benefits of the contributions, such as the TIGER passes for under-25s. She highlighted the importance of these passes in providing access to employment and education for young people who cannot afford a car.

Councillor Bridget Smith queried the Tiger Pass engagement percentage (referenced in the Chief Executive Highlights Report in paragraph 4.1) , which officers confirmed to be the percentage of people who were engaged with and then went further in the process. Industry standard was stated to be about 0.5% so the engagement of 2.69% far exceeds this.

Expressing her support of the budget, Councillor Sarah Conboy noted the importance of public money achieving high standards and the need for a direction of travel for rural areas. She emphasised the challenges of increasing services without clear funding solutions and the importance of working together to deliver for the community.

Councillor Anna Smith confirmed Cambridge City Council's support of this budget, commenting that the subsidy for the bus fare cap is money well spent. She also highlighted the fact that the CPCA share of residents' council tax bills is very small.

The Mayor concluded by emphasising the need for sustainable bus routes and exploring alternative solutions like Demand Responsive Transport (DRT), community car networks and working with other partners like the NHS. He acknowledged the challenges of reversing 40 years of bus deregulation and called for continued efforts to improve public transport services in the region.

The board resolved to support the budget, recognizing the challenges and the need for continued efforts to improve public transport services in the region.

On being proposed by the Mayor, seconded by Councillor Dennis Jones, it was resolved to:

- A Note the proposed Mayoral budget for 2025-26, including the proposal to maintain the precept at £36 for a Band D property, and to provide comments to the Mayor regarding the proposed Mayoral Budget.
- B Approve the draft Mayoral Budget, including the proposed Mayoral precept noted above.
- C Delegate minor changes to the Mayor's budget, due to finalisation of council tax base figures, to the Executive Director of Resources.

The voting was recorded as follows, with a majority in favour, less than 2/3 of constituent council members present and voting having voted against.

	For	Against	Abstain
Councillor Anna Bailey		X	
Councillor Chris Boden		X	
Councillor Sarah Conboy	X		
Councillor Dennis Jones	X		
Councillor Lucy Nethsingha	X		
Councillor Anna Smith	X		
Councillor Bridget Smith	X		

11 **Draft 2025/26 Corporate Strategy and Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan 2025-2029**

The Executive Director, Resources, along with the Director Policy and Engagement, introduced the report, emphasising key points to members.

An amendment had been received: proposed by Councillor Anna Bailey and seconded by Councillor Chris Boden.

The CPCA Board notes:

- *That the CPCA has adopted a benchmark of £12 per passenger journey in public subsidy for bus services*
- *The hard work that officers have put in to try to improve bus routes and ensure they perform at sustainable and justifiable levels of public expenditure*
- *That despite best efforts, based on currently available data, certain underperforming routes are operating at totally unrealistic and unjustifiable levels of public subsidy, which are costing the public purse far in excess of 10 times the £12 benchmark and in one case over 20 times*

The CPCA Board further notes:

- *The Mayor is proposing to increase the Transport Levy on Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council by 2% in 2025/26, followed by an additional 4% in 2026/27, 4% in 2027/28 and 2% in 2028/29, reducing the amount the Highways Authorities have to maintain our roads and pavements.*

The CPCA therefore agrees to the following additional recommendation:

- *Subject to the reduction of the Bus Subsidy funding by £313k and a corresponding reduction of £313k in the Transport Levy to be divided between Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council using the existing formula.*

During the debate on the amendment, Councillor Anna Bailey highlighted the lack of changes in the worst-performing routes, emphasising the need for better oversight. Councillor Chris Boden proposed that the reallocation of funds equivalent to three bus services to reduce the levy for the highways authority would be a more sensible use of the money, diverting it to areas with greater demand.

A request was made to verify the accuracy of the passenger data, which was confirmed to be from 2023/24 with costing updates for 2024/25. The need for clarity in decision-making and the effective use of public money was highlighted, with work underway and suggestions to reconfigure routes with low uptake.

Questions were raised about the contract lengths for bus services, with an explanation provided about the 1+1 year contract model and the commitment to monitoring and evaluation. The importance of increasing ridership and the potential negative impact on residents who rely on bus services was emphasised. Reservations were expressed about the amendment, but there was support for better relationships with operators and up-to-date information.

Confirmation was sought that the amendment would not impact planned or current services, which was affirmed for the short-term of 2025/26 but that it would need to be revisited next year. Concerns were also raised about the amendment implying a formally adopted cap on subsidies. The common goal of providing the best value bus service and resolving legacy issues was acknowledged.

Following a request for clarification about the amendment, the Monitoring Officer confirmed that if a member of the Board was to vote in favour of the amendment it did not mean that the member concerned agreed with the preamble to the amendment put to the meeting by those members who moved and seconded the amendment.

On being put to a vote, the amendment was carried. The recorded vote is shown as below:

	For	Against	Abstain
Councillor Anna Bailey	X		
Councillor Chris Boden	X		
Councillor Sarah Conboy			X
Mayor Dr Nik Johnson	X		
Councillor Dennis Jones	X		

Councillor Lucy Nethsingha	X		
Councillor Anna Smith	X		
Councillor Bridget Smith			X
Nitin Patel	X		

During the main debate, Councillor Bridget Smith sought clarification on the change and consolidation of funding for UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), expressing concerns about the fair distribution of money across the region and the potential loss of local expertise. Officers confirmed that the UKSPF would be managed at the Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA) level, with decisions made by the Investment Committee in line with delegations, which includes representatives from each constituent authority and the Business Board. The Investment Committee can make decisions up to the value of £5m, but can refer decisions up to the Combined Authority Board where they feel it is appropriate.

Councillor Lucy Nethsingha expressed her enthusiasm for the trailblazer Youth Guarantee Programme, highlighting its importance in preventing young people from dropping out of education and ensuring their future employability. She praised the programme as a significant vote of confidence in the CPCA.

Raising concerns about the forecasted net impact of the employer's national insurance increase, Councillor Chris Boden highlighted that local authorities had only been partially reimbursed in the past. He cautioned against assuming full reimbursement for the CPCA.

Councillor Anna Bailey voiced opposition to the overall budget and the four-year term budget, citing residents feedback in the consultation. She criticised the proposals for the bus fare cap and the lack of a sustainable plan for the TIGER pass beyond the summer, describing these measures as short-term solutions.

Supporting the continuation of the UKSPF and emphasising the importance of constituent authorities' input, Councillor Anna Smith praised the positive initiatives in the budget, such as the TIGER pass and fare cap. She stressed the need for ongoing support to improve transport and rural connectivity.

The Mayor confirmed that based on the current forecast the TIGER pass could be funded until December and emphasised the importance of getting people out of cars and onto buses to build a better bus system. He highlighted the immediate goal of increasing passenger numbers as part of the longer-term priority of reforming the bus network.

On being proposed by the Mayor, seconded by Councillor Lucy Nethsingha, it was resolved to:

- A Note the consultation feedback received during the consultation period including the feedback from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as set out in paragraph 2.26.
- B Approve the draft Corporate Strategy following its refresh subject to the inclusion of the final financial information once the budget is approved.

[7 for, 2 against, 0 abstentions]

- C Approve the use of the Programme Response Fund in 2024-25 and 2025-26 to support the requirements of the English Devolution White Paper with any underspend on the Fund in 2024-25 being set aside in an earmarked Response Reserve. **[UNANIMOUS]**
- D Delegate authority to the Chief Executive to approve the draw down of the Programme Response Fund in 2024-25 and 2025-26, and the earmarked Response Reserve, in relation to costs arising as a result of addressing the English Devolution White Paper. **[UNANIMOUS]**
- E Approve the inclusion of the "Connect to Work" Get Britain Working initial funding of £100k split across 2024-25 and 2025-26. See paragraph 2.23. **[UNANIMOUS]**
- F Approve the Draft Budget for 2025-26 and the Capital Programme and Medium-Term Financial Plan 2025-26 to 2028-29 as contained in Appendices C, D and E and including project reprofiling set out in Appendix F, **subject to the reduction of the bus subsidy funding by £313k and a corresponding reduction of £313k in the Transport Levy to be divided between Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council using the existing formula. [7 for, 2 against, 0 abstentions – recorded vote shown below]**
- G ~~Approve a 2% increase in the Transport Levy for 2025-26 totalling £14,039,563 – £10,277,774 from Cambridgeshire County Council and £3,761,789 from Peterborough City Council. Approve~~ **a 0.27% reduction in the Transport Levy for 2025-26 totalling £13,726,563 - £10,048,640 from Cambridgeshire County Council and £3,677,923 from Peterborough City Council.**

[UNANIMOUS]

H Approve the usage of the 2025-26 BSIP revenue grant allocation to fund an extension of the local single journey bus fare cap beyond 31 March 2025 as set out in paragraphs 2.54 and 2.55, noting that the additional costs associated with the £2 fare cap retention from January to March 2025 will be the first call on the transport underspend in 2024-25. **[7 for, 2 against, 0 abstentions, recorded vote shown below]**

I Note the Mayor’s intention to allocate Highways Maintenance grants totalling £37,369,000 to Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council in line with the Department for Transport formula for determining each Council’s share resulting in the allocations of £29,793,213 and £7,575,787 respectively with more detail set out in paragraph 2.24.

J Delegate any minor changes required to the budget before 1 April 2025 to the Executive Director of Resources including the inclusion of grant announcements made prior to 1 April 2025.

[UNANIMOUS]

The vote split for each of the recommendations is shown above, with the voting for recommendation F and H recorded as below.

	RECOMMENDATION F			RECOMMENDATION H		
	For	Against	Abstain	For	Against	Abstain
Councillor Anna Bailey		X			X	
Councillor Chris Boden		X			X	
Councillor Sarah Conboy	X			X		
Mayor Dr Nik Johnson	X			X		
Councillor Dennis Jones	X			X		
Councillor Lucy Nethsingha	X			X		
Councillor Anna Smith	X			X		
Councillor Bridget Smith	X			X		
Nitin Patel	X			X		

12 **Investment Committee Papers**

The PMO Programme Lead introduced the report and highlighted key points to members, clarifying that paragraph 5.2 of the report (referring to the Digital Connectivity Strategy Implementation) should have stated that the cost of year 1 is £1.8m.

The Mayor expressed delight that the Cygnet Bridge project, which began in 2022, has secured further investment to continue its development in the city.

Regarding the Strategic Investment and Innovation Growth Fund, it was noted that earlier work is needed to ensure equitable distribution of resources. Lessons learned from past experiences will be applied to reach areas that typically do not receive top priority.

It was emphasised that the fund should align with growth plans to create interventions that have the largest economic impact.

For the Littleport project, discussions focused on ownership and implementing different approaches. To ensure project viability, it was suggested to include mechanisms for clawback or ongoing interest, such as placing a charge on property. This would allow the Combined Authority to recoup funds if projects do not proceed as planned.

On being proposed by the Mayor, seconded by Nitin Patel, it was resolved unanimously to:

- A Approve the change request and budget increase of £2m for the Cygnet Bridge project.
- B Approve the concept proposal for the CPCA Strategic Investment and Innovation Growth Fund and for it to be developed into a business case as the next stage.
- C Approve the concept proposal for Littleport Business and Community Centre and for it to be developed into a business case as the next stage.
- D Note the Chief Executive Approval Decisions from December 2024.

	E Note the decisions from Investment Committee held on 16 December 2024.
13	Greater South East Net Zero Hub - Overview of programmes, finance and governance
	<p>The Director of the Greater South East Net Zero Hub introduced the report and highlighted key points to members.</p> <p>Members expressed their satisfaction with the work taking place and the level of leadership carried out across the country. Thanks were requested to be acknowledged on the record for this really impactful work.</p> <p>Councillor Bridget Smith particularly expressed her thanks to the team as a lot of the work has been extremely difficult with some of the grants and they have done astonishingly well.</p> <p>It was resolved to:</p> <p>A Note the overview of the Greater South East Net Zero Hub (GSENZH) including an overview of programmes, finance and governance</p>
14	Committee Calendar 2025/26
	<p>The Director, Legal and Governance and Monitoring Officer introduced the report.</p> <p>On being proposed by Mayor, seconded by Councillor Lucy Nethsingha, it was resolved unanimously to:</p> <p>A Approve the calendar of meetings for the 2025/26 Municipal Year</p>

Chairman at the meeting on
Wednesday, 22 January 2025