



Audit and Governance Committee

18 July 2024

Title:	Improvement Framework
Report of:	Angela Probert, Interim Director of Transformation Programme
Lead Member:	Mayor, Dr Nik Johnson
Public Report:	Yes
Key Decision:	No
Voting Arrangements:	A simple majority of all Members present and voting

Recommendations:

A	Note the progress in May against the identified areas of ongoing concern set out in the Best Value Notice received in January 2024.
B	Note the update from the Chair, Independent Improvement Board following the meeting held on 1 July 2024

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 aim to meet the concerns set out in the Best Value Notice, January 2024. By making necessary improvements, the capacity, culture and governance of the Combined Authority will support and enable the delivery of identified priorities and objectives set out in the Corporate Plan and result in the CPCA being seen as achieving best value and high performance.

1. Purpose

1.1	This report provides the Audit and Governance Committee with an opportunity to review the progress made in the improvement programme, phase 3, up to the end of May to address the concerns set out in the Best Value Notice dated January 2024.
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2. Update on Improvement activity

2.1	<p>The Best Value Notice (January 2024) acknowledged the steps the CPCA has 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’s progress in delivering the agreed improvement plan.</p> <p>The Notice identified the following expectations of the Combined Authority:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to implement and embed the changes agreed by the Combined Authority Board as part of the improvement plan. • Continue to implement and monitor cultural change across the organisation, for both officers and members, with a focus on measurable outcomes. • 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. We hope that this can be achieved through consensus but, if not all stakeholders are ready to fully engage, the opportunity should be left open for them to do so when they feel ready to. This work is also important in informing CPCA’s approach to further devolution.
2.2	<p>Overall progress in May 2024</p> <p>Progress continues across all three themes of the Improvement programme in phase 3. The overall status of the Improvement programme is rated as Green to reflect the progress made across all three improvement themes; and in particular the progress made in supporting a positive member culture set out in paragraph 2.3 below.</p> <p>On 24th June, we celebrated our first CIVIL employee awards event with over 100 employees in attendance. The awards were a fantastic opportunity for us to come together and say thank you to all staff for their continued support and dedication to the organisation. It was great to see so many smiling colleagues, enjoying the chance to connect, collaborate and enjoy time together. We received over 90 nominations as part of the process with 10 categories being awarded. The categories included specific awards for our CIVIL values (Collaboration, Integrity, Vision, Innovation and Leadership) as well as recognising our Team of the Year, Our Unsung Heroes, Our employee Committed to Delivering our Mayoral Pledges, the Pride of CPCA and a special CX Excellence Award. We celebrated our achievements and successes and heard about the fabulous work taking place across the organisation. We were pleased to be joined by the Mayor, Nik Johnson, Deputy Mayor, Cllr Anna Smith and Cllr Lucy Nethsingha to present awards. Paul Medd, CX of Fenland District Council also attended to present our Collaboration award.</p> <p>May was a particularly significant month for the strategic priorities workstream as the end of the month saw the Combined Authority attend UKREiiF for the first time along with the publication of the area’s first investment prospectus. This prospectus, and the key messaging at UKREiiF, were co-developed in partnership with our constituent authorities providing a high profile demonstration of collaboration.</p> <p>Significant further activity is underway / planned for June and July, however the announcement of the General Election on the 4th July, and the associated pre-election period has meant that some of the activities, including the first meeting of the Investment Committee and the Transport Summit, is to be postponed. Determining new dates for these actions is still underway.</p> <p>The recent Internal audit on Procurement that resulted in a ‘significantly assured’ opinion is encouraging, both in that historical issues that have been addressed and that there is good evidence of improvements being embedded.</p> <p>The current Internal Audit’s focus is ‘Embedding continuous improvement’. This will provide valuable learning for the Combined Authority in looking forward and build on the improvements already made. It is also proposed to work with the LGA to develop and put in place a Peer Review post the next Mayoral election in 2025.</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> <p>A document evidencing the progress that has been made is attached as Appendix 2.</p>
2.3	<p>Continue to implement and monitor cultural change across the organisation, for both officers and members, with a focus on measurable outcomes (Green)</p> <p>The Improvement Group agreed at its last meeting that activity relating to culture change is on track; and therefore RAG rated this area of improvement as Green.</p> <p>This position reflects the activity underway, the manner in which matters are being conducted and the progress being made. Officers have initiated and supported, as far as they are able, outside the political interactions between parties represented on the CA Board, the building of a positive culture between members and officers, supported by a broad member development programme. This combined with the ongoing positive culture and partnership working both within the CPCA and across the region has strengthened the ability of the Combined Authority to deliver against its stated vision and strategic ambitions.</p> <p>Member culture change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In June 2024 the CA Board received an annual report on member development which highlighted the range and breadth of training and development undertaken. • The relationship between officers and members is positive and respectful and business at the CA Board in June 2024 was conducted in an appropriate manner. • The most recent Leaders Strategy Meeting (LSM) considered amongst other issues, Bus reform and there was a rounded and balanced discussion across all political groups. • The recent strategic planning workshop has seen representation from all political parties; something that was not the case in earlier months. • LGA/IIB activity with Board members continues. <p>Officer culture change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place Directors Workshop on 9th May held to continually improve ways of working. • Staff survey has been analysed and used to develop plan to address areas for improvement. Update and actions shared with staff • First Senior Leadership Team network took place in April and Terms of Reference for the group are being developed to be shared and discussed at the next meeting (3rd June). A communication platform (Teams) has been created to enable further collaboration and best practice discussion amongst the Network. • Staff awards event 'The CIVILS' took place on 24th June as set out in paragraph 2.2 above. • Over 85% of LEAP appraisal paperwork, reviewing 2023/24, have been received into HR

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff training to support values and behaviours continues. Training that we have run since January 2024 (attended by approx. 90 colleagues across the sessions) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Having difficult conversations ○ Licence to recruit ○ Inclusive Recruitment ○ Outlook/Teams/Planner tips ○ Report writing skills. ○ Power hour training sessions based on Employee feedback (attended by approx. 70 colleagues in total across the sessions).
2.4	<p>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)</p> <p>Key activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance at UKREiiF at the end of May with the Authority’s stall recording 272 unique visitors from 209 organisations. Positive feedback has been received about the Authority’s stall and events. Work to follow up on key connections is now underway. • Second stakeholder workshop held to develop the shared vision completed, with representation from all constituent authorities. • Staff member sessions on shared ambition ran on the 15th May with 25 attendees and very positive feedback. • Plan is on track to deliver the shared ambition to the CA Board in September 2024
2.5	<p>Continue to implement and embed the changes agreed by the Combined Authority Board as part of the improvement plan (Green)</p> <p>Key activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant work has continued to support the implementation of the SAF and the required changes to the PMO to support the SAF. A communication strategy has been implemented to ensure staff have access to the latest updates and weekly videos are posted and shared. • Risk Management has also progressed. Directorate risk registers have been uploaded on the new system and we are monitoring their use. Risk training is now in staff diaries for completion in June. • The work on the Single Project Register (SPR) has been completed and an agreed prioritised SPR has been shared with staff, this will enable staff to focus on identified projects over the next year • Project Management & Procurement training was completed in March, but work has been ongoing with exam arrangements and surveys. 461 staff and partners have been upskilled through APM, Procurement & Contract Management training and this number will increase as more complete the online Procurement Fundamentals course. Training surveys have been created and feedback from participants will be collated. Results will be fed into July’s Highlight Report and a further survey will be issued in 6 months to further assess positive impact and culture shift. Business Case training is being planned for the relevant staff and persons involved in Business Case creation and oversight. • An Investment Panel SAF Workshop was held on 29th May to discuss the nuance accountabilities between Thematic Committees and the SAF forums. It was agreed that two weekly working groups will be held in the lead up to the Investment Committee to ensure that the Panel is set up for success before the first official Investment Panel is held. Further

	<p>engagement is taking place with teams with a planned session with the Senior Leadership Team at its meeting in July.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The PMO Hub went live on 31st May containing links to the SAF, Risk Framework & Procedure, Change Control Process, Single Project Register, all supporting guidance/documentation and other useful project tools. The Change Delivery Handbook will be uploaded w/c 3rd June. Engagement with Directorates and Partners is being planned through June/July. • There has been a delay in PMO recruitment, but this is now covered in a plan that clearly sets out mitigation to any risk through temporary staff and a structured recruitment plan, covering up to three months. The mitigation in place ensures the risk remains low.
2.6	<p>Engagement with Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC)</p> <p>Informal engagement continues with DLUHC. The next meeting to formally set out evidence of progress is scheduled for 12th July. A prospectus of the overall improvements since 2022 and the impact of these is being collated to share with the new Government.</p>
2.7	<p>Engagement with Independent Improvement Board</p> <p>The last meeting of the Independent Improvement Board (IIB) took place on 1 July where an update on the progress over May 2024 was presented. The Corporate Management Team attended the meeting to share with the IIB its reflection on the progress made over the last two years and its vision for the future.</p> <p>A note from the Chair following the meeting is attached as Appendix 3.</p> <p>The IIB is to meet with the CA Board and constituent chief executives on 10 July to seek individuals perception of the progress made.</p>

3. Background

3.1	The proposals set out in this report respond to the report presented to CA Board in March 2024 and the new Best Value Notice received in January 2024.
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4. Appendices

4.1	<p>Appendix 1 – Improvement Plan Highlight report, March 2024</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Evidence pack of progress</p> <p>Appendix 3 – Note from Chair, IIB May 2024</p>
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5. Implications

Financial Implications

5.1	There are no direct implications of this report. The current improvement plan budget assumes that the majority of improvement plan workstreams will transition to business-as-usual activities in the second half of the current financial year, although with provision for the Independent Improvement Board to continue until March 2025.
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Legal Implications

6.1	The Improvement plan is owned by the Combined Authority Board as a whole.
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	<p>In January 2024, the CPCA was issued a Best Value Notice (“Notice”) which is a formal notification that the Department has concerns regarding an authority and is a request that the authority engages with the Department to provide assurance of improvement. The Notice was issued outside the statutory powers held by the Secretary of State under the Local Government Act 1999 to inspect or intervene in local authorities where there is evidence of Best Value failure and, separately, under section 230 of the Local Government Act 1972 to request information from local authorities.</p> <p>The Best Value Notice will lapse in July 2024.</p> <p>The delivery of the actions within this report as well as any subsequently identified actions, supports the CPCA in demonstrating that it is achieving sustainable and continuous improvement. Ultimately, the changes made through this improvement plan will enable the CPCA to effectively deliver its strategic priorities and ensure it is delivering value for money.</p>
Public Health Implications	
7.1	None
Environmental & Climate Change Implications	
8.1	None
Other Significant Implications	
9.1	None
Background Papers	
10.1	
10.2	