

**PERFORMANCE, ASSETS AND STRATEGY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE**

9 December 2025  
5.30 - 8.35 pm

**Present:** Councillors Porrer (Chair), Gawthrope Wood (Vice-Chair), Clough, Dalzell, Davey, Griffin, Pounds and Sheil

**Councillors also present:** Councillors Bennett, Bick (online), Gardiner-Smith, Holloway, Nestor (online), Wade (online) and Young

**Ward Councillors in attendance:** Councillors Baigent and Blackburn-Horgan

**Officers in attendance:**

Stephen Kelly	Joint Director Planning and Building Control
Lynne Miles	Director Economy and Place
Dan Kalley	Democratic Services Manager
Sarah Michael	Democratic Services Officer (Meeting producer)

**Officers Cambridge Growth Company:**

Peter Freeman	Chair, Cambridge Growth Company
Beth Dugdale	Deputy Chief Executive
Katie Brown	Senior Public Affairs and Engagement Manager
Chris Pike	Head of Legal
Jim Ward	Market Demand Advisor
Karen Clark	Head of Strategic Communication
Nathan Ver	Environment Sustainability Advisor
Anthony Hollingsworth	Director of Planning and Place (online)

**FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL**

**25/27/P&A Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence received.

**25/28/P&A Declarations of Interest**

A non-pecuniary declaration of interest was made by Councillor Davey in respect of item 25/31/PAS, as he was a Director at Cambridge United Football

Club. In addition he was also part of the Advisory Council that setup the Cambridge Growth Company.

## 25/29/P&A Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2023 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

## 25/30/P&A Public Questions

### Question 1

Given the huge scale of growth that ministers are proposing for Cambridge, what considerations have Cambridge City Council and the Cambridge Growth Company given to the regional level facilities that Cambridge does not have but more than likely will need, including but not limited to:

- a new urban centre as recommended by John Parry Lewis in his report on the Cambridge Sub-region in 1974
- a new large concert hall as mentioned by the CPCA Mayor
- a new large lifelong learning centre mindful of the skills crisis
- new world class transport hubs.

The Leader responded with the following:

- i. Urban centres and community facilities are integral to the Local Plan making process, and the Growth Company would be expected to follow the same approach.
- ii. The Cambridge East site was currently an “obvious potential” area for consideration, subject to ongoing Local Plan work and Growth Company proposals.
- iii. The concept of a new concert hall was included in the local growth plan.
- iv. The City Council was exploring significant investment in the Corn Exchange, ahead of its 150th anniversary, and is also examining major upgrades to Cambridge Junction, acknowledging the pressure on cultural infrastructure.
- v. Supporting young people was a priority, and the new Included Programme aims to ensure access to opportunities for every young person, regardless of background.

Additionally, the Cabinet Member for Planning and Transport made the following points:

- i. Cambridge East would require a new local centre, the details of which would emerge through the masterplanning process.
- ii. The Council aimed for world-class transport hubs, including train stations and park-and-ride sites.
- iii. Planned station improvements, including changes at Cambridge City station, would deliver some of the most accessible stations in the UK, supporting active travel, public transport integration, and seamless ticketing.

A supplementary question was asked and key points outlined:

- i. Investors remain uncertain “who is in charge”, reflecting concerns from a recent parliamentary debate.
- ii. Infrastructure must not be overlooked as Cambridge expands in multiple directions under ministerial direction.
- iii. Residents require greater opportunities to question the Growth Company, its leadership, developers, and lobbyists.
- iv. Research by academic Cleo Valentine in neuro-architecture highlights that current developments may negatively impact mental wellbeing.

The Leader responded with the following points:

- i. Recent letters and announcements from Government Minister Matthew Pennycook and Mr Freeman emphasised an infrastructure-led approach, which the Council strongly supports.
- ii. Infrastructure must include not only transport infrastructure but also community facilities, which were essential to quality of life as Cambridge grows.
- iii. The Emerging Local Plan was the main mechanism for properly planning facilities and infrastructure. It was currently open for public consultation.
- iv. Over 100 in-person events are being held across the area.
- v. Residents were encouraged to participate and submit comments online.
- vi. Future proposals from the Growth Company would require their own public consultation, and the Council expected this to be thorough and meaningful.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Transport also made the following points:

- i. Stations and park-and-ride sites should be world-class transport hubs, enabling active travel, public transport, and integrated ticketing.

- ii. Forthcoming station changes aim to make them among the most accessible in Britain.

## **25/31/P&A Cambridge Growth Company - Update for Cambridge City Council Scrutiny**

The Chair welcomed the Cambridge Growth Company (CGC) to the meeting and for taking the time to present to the Committee.

Peter Freeman, Chair of the CGC and Beth Dugdale, Deputy Chief Executive, presented to the Committee the role of the CGC and highlighted some of the key work that had been undertaken so far and what the CGC had planned over the coming years. This included:

- i. Working collaboratively with partner organisations, delivering public squares/parks, mixed-use neighbourhoods, walkability/cyclability, and close-by primary schools
- ii. Planning beyond electoral/economic cycles, enabling upfront infrastructure over 25 years or more.
- iii. The Advisory Council comprised the four elected local leaders and sector experts (water, transport, innovation), with plans to expand membership (business/innovation, community voice).
- iv. This was a growing team, which would have roughly 50 staff once fully up and running.
- v. The team had supported the station relocation in Waterbeach to help unlock a further 4,500 homes.
- vi. Helped convene the Water Scarcity Group which was now linked to the DEFRA water taskforce.
- vii. CGC funded £3m for the new hospital business case and supported Transport & Works Act Order processes
- viii. Following the October announcement, £400m is in place for CGC's next phase (infrastructure, water upgrades). CGC/Homes England named investment partner for the University of Cambridge Innovation Hub. CGC—working with DfT and CPCA—is procuring a mass rapid transit options study.
- ix. In terms of the Development Corporation consultation, the Government intends to consult in early 2026, on a centrally led Development Corporation. It was hoped a DevCo planning committee could be operational by the end of 2026, with local leaders sitting on the Board. These powers would be used collaboratively, respecting the Combined Authority Mayor's role in spatial development strategies and building on the emerging Local Plan.

The Chair outlined a number of themes for the committee to ask questions of the CGC, these are listed below:

**Structure of CGC, a Development Corporation, local engagement and the links with democratically elected representatives now and under a Unitary**

Members raised a number of questions and a summary of the responses are highlighted:

- i. In relation to Hartree the Housing Infrastructure Fund costs escalated to £575 million from the original £225-£275 million. Anglian Water would not co-fund due to other priorities/regulations. It may be possible the scheme will come forward at a future date, but this would be unlikely to be soon. Future densification at science parks may help absorb some of the pressures Hartree was meant to address.
- ii. The Development Corporation's geography were ministerial decisions and would be set out in the consultation. The evidence base at the current time showed that the Greater Cambridge area between the City and South Cambridgeshire was working well.
- iii. There was a strong commitment to tree planting. Modern estates lacked provision for trees and CGC were keen to avoid this.
- iv. The CGC were committed to working and engaging with residents, any plans would be tested with the Advisory Council, aligning with local council structures.
- v. CGC had now started to attend some of the events with residents around future plans and this proved useful to understand how the CGC could compliment some of the development planned.
- vi. Assurance was given that governance on the Development Corporation would be transparent with local leaders on board.
- vii. The local authority structure was changing, however it was recognised that political representation on the corporation board was essential and that final numbers and proportionality of members was still to be determined.
- viii. Any Development Corporation planning powers would focus on major strategic sites, with the Shared Planning Service likely commissioned for casework preparation.
- ix. CGC acknowledged the importance of heritage to civic identity and community acceptance. There was a commitment to incorporating heritage considerations into engagement and planning.

- x. The advantage of a Development Corporation was the ability to plan long-term budgets and infrastructure investment. There was an ability to dedicate time to major, complex projects that councils may not be able to resource at the same intensity.

### **Transport routes and corridors - Mayoral powers and impact on development**

Members raised a number of questions and a summary of the responses are highlighted:

- i. CGC participates in the Greater Cambridge Transport Strategy Working Group alongside council officers. CGC was tasked with addressing a broader, longer-term “exam question” than the Local Plan, including maximising economic potential and ensuring sustainable and inclusive growth.
- ii. Higher growth assumptions allowed for exploration of more ambitious long-term transport options, including mass rapid transit, supported by the Department for Transport.
- iii. CGC is sharing modelling assumptions with local partners to ensure short-term and long-term strategies dovetail.
- iv. CGC supports growth already planned and underway, and does not wish to see delays to schemes that underpin Local Plan delivery. Transition from busways to light rail may be possible in future; evidence is being gathered to determine appropriate timing.
- v. Collaboration with the Combined Authority Mayor was the preferred option in terms of creating affordable sustainable routes that aligned with Local Plan growth.
- vi. The Waterbeach station relocation was part of the 2018 Local Plan policy, there was an acknowledgment that this created longer walking times for residents.
- vii. CGC intervened at Waterbeach specifically to address Section 106 cash-flow constraints. The water infrastructure issue had now been escalated to a cross-Whitehall ministerial group. Ministers were scrutinising Anglian Water’s decision-making and seeking solutions.

### **Planning issues - compliance with new local plan, hierarchy of development in new local plan, devolved planning powers**

Members raised a number of questions and a summary of the responses are highlighted:

- i. CGC was reviewing its work and aligning with evidence as part of the Local Plan, avoiding duplication wherever possible. The CGC committed to respecting the proposed hierarchy of development in the new local plan.
- ii. A significant proportion of land may pass through or be financed by the CGC, putting them in a stronger position to enforce quality standards. An example could be seen as Copenhagen's model of acquiring land and awarding schemes based on design quality rather than land price.
- iii. CGC intended to emphasise schemes chosen on merit, rather than allowing excessive land bidding to drive down quality.
- iv. There was no plan to interfere with neighbourhood plans, the focus was on major strategic sites.
- v. CGC confirmed that they would intend to add value and work with the grain of the planning service, which was already of high quality.
- vi. There was support for urban strategic settlements and not dispersing lots of development into villages.
- vii. Environmental principles developed through the OxCam regional partnership remained central. Five key themes include: net zero delivery at scale, nature recovery, land-use principles, water challenges (quality, supply, wastewater), and alignment with existing evidence bases dating back to 2018.
- viii. Work would focus on affordable housing including social rented accommodation and this would be locally driven.

### **Infrastructure and community building including affordable/social homes but also arts and culture, open spaces and biodiversity**

Members raised a number of questions and a summary of the responses are highlighted:

- i. Open space and play areas were critical and this would support standards raised as part of the Local Plan.
- ii. CGC confirmed that detailed site-specific planning was not yet at that stage but emphasised that local open-space provision and play spaces were critical for good neighbourhoods and align with principles in the emerging Local Plan.
- iii. Arts and culture must be shaped through local engagement. Work was underway with CPC to map current cultural provision and understand future needs.
- iv. Officers confirmed strong alignment with Homes England principles and acknowledged the value of the existing partnership model.

- v. Plans were outlined for dedicated leads in education, health, and culture whose role would be to coordinate with relevant authorities to ensure facilities were delivered on time.
- vi. East Barnwell and The Meadows were cited as good examples of high quality community hubs, which could be modelled as development took place across the city.
- vii. CGC indicated that while the £400 million funding was a start, significantly more will be needed—and central government was aware of this.
- viii. There was a strategic aim to increase government commitment over time, building cross-departmental alliances (Treasury, DfT, trade, investment). There was a confidence expressed that long-term recovery of investment through land value capture and tax base growth was feasible.
- ix. There was a reaffirmed commitment to meeting the 40% affordable housing target, especially for large strategic sites such as the airport. It was emphasised that balanced communities are essential to achieve economic growth outcomes desired by government.

### **Water scarcity and foul water infrastructure (incl. NEC)**

Members raised a number of questions and a summary of the responses are highlighted:

- i. The existence of a Water Scarcity Group and a ministerial task force overseeing issues with Anglian Water and future reservoir transfers was in place.
- ii. CGC gave a clear commitment to respect environmental constraints and pursue multi-agency solutions.
- iii. CGC would not override water limits, solutions would be delivered via the Water Scarcity Group, which would include ministerial oversight.
- iv. Water credits, retrofitting programmes, nature-based solutions and reservoir methods must be considered holistically.
- v. A multi-million-pound water-retrofit programme was underway for council-owned stock across South Cambridgeshire and the City. A joint-developed dashboard now monitors water-supply/demand ratios within environmental limits
- vi. In the New Year the Edington recycling trial will begin. The CGC had supported enabling such trials.
- vii. CGC continued to advocate to secure skills funding via CPCAs.

## Other areas for discussion

Members raised a number of questions and a summary of the responses are highlighted:

- i. Funding for a Development Corporation was awarded directly from the treasury and not the CPCA.
- ii. CGC were intent on expanded models such as the one used by Hill to accelerate skills academies within construction and other key skilled areas.

## Ward Councillor Questions

In response to questions raised by ward councillors Blackburn-Horgan and Baigent the following was stated:

- i. Timelines for the wider development corporation are dependent on ministerial decisions and upcoming consultations.
- ii. The Advisory Council is reviewing membership and expanding representation.
- iii. Work is underway with Homes England, including its emerging role as a public-sector finance institution ("PUFIN"), to support private-sector investment.
- iv. A comprehensive approach to sites such as the Cambridge Biomedical Campus (CBC) has been advocated through a Written Ministerial Statement (May 2024).
- v. CGC recognised the severity of congestion issues and the need for strategic transport planning.
- vi. Work was ongoing with transport experts, with an appointment expected soon to help understand some of the issues.
- vii. Social rent and affordability concerns had already been addressed but the CGC wanted to work with the emerging local plan around ensuring this was addressed.

At this point in the meeting the Chair sought consent to briefly continue past the three hour guillotine to which members agreed.

The Chair thanked the CGC for attending the meeting and welcomed the opportunity to hear progress at a future meeting.

## **25/32/P&A Work Programme**

The Committee noted the work programme and that the meeting on 27 January would focus on the Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy. Members were welcome to suggest further items to Democratic Services.

The meeting ended at 8.35 pm

**CHAIR**