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I live in Wansford, a village just outside Peterborough, where I was the local MP. My parents were NHS nurses and I grew up in Whittlesey, in the Fens.

So I'm Cambridgeshire through and through.

The first question that I ask people when I'm out campaigning is pretty simple: 'Did you know we had a Mayor?' Their answer is nearly always, 'No!'

It's not their fault. Unlike other mayors around the country, there is no obvious sign that ours has made a difference, despite the enormous potential of our region. We need that to change.

I will get Cambridgeshire and Peterborough moving. This manifesto explains how.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Bristow', with a stylized, flowing script.

Paul Bristow

The Conservative Candidate for
Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough



The Mayoralty

It's time to make a change. We need a Mayor who will be visible, get stuff done and make our day-to-day lives a bit easier.

Make the Mayor matter

I don't agree with everything Andy Burnham says, but it's hard to deny that he makes Manchester's voice heard. Good mayors need a personality, a profile and clear priorities. Sir Andy Street had all three attributes and, when I met him recently for advice, he stressed another as essential to his success: putting region before party. I am proud to be a Conservative, but there is no question for me that the needs of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough come first.

Politics here has become toxic and broken, as this election proves. We deserve someone who will be ambitious for our region and get things done. Someone who will work with every political party and every council leader. Someone who can go beyond their direct responsibilities, using the convening power of the Mayor to bring organisations and individuals around a table and get results. I am excited about the things we can achieve.

Stop increasing our tax

The current Mayor put a precept on our council tax after saying he wouldn't, then trebled it, then tried to increase it again, after sneaking a tax option into his budget consultation. It took my campaign and 94% of residents opposing an increase for him to back down. Sadly, Labour won't stop there, because their plans for bus franchising involve raising an additional £637 million from the precept, with 'no upper limit'. Enough is enough. There are other franchising models available that don't rely on higher council tax to produce a viable bus network. I will never increase the mayoral precept.

Unlock new powers

The government's English Devolution white paper outlines the new powers arriving for mayors. Strategic planning is perhaps the most important of all. Our Mayor will get similar planning powers to the Mayor of London, with the ability to decide planning applications of potential strategic significance. All we need to do is adopt a planning strategy first. Frustratingly, the spatial plan for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough hasn't been updated since 2018, making this a bigger task. Sorting it out and adopting a spatial development strategy will be one of my early priorities.

Most mayoral authorities are getting an integrated settlement next year, resolving many of the frustrations with the funding system. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough won't. The combined authority was put under special measures, after Labour's spectacular governance failures and the resulting loss of staff. A 'best value notice' was only lifted in the autumn, preventing us from becoming an Established Mayoral Strategic Authority with proper funding rights. I will push hard to overturn this legacy and get our region the settlement that we deserve.

Many powers will be transferred soon. For policing, that's unlikely, because we elected our Police and Crime Commissioner last year. Some candidates seem to have forgotten that recent result. Although I have strong views on zero-tolerance policing and crushing crime, you won't find them in this manifesto, which is about things that I can do in the next four years.

Get the funding in place

Commentary on how I might fund capital projects has focused exclusively on the precept, which raises £11 million per year at today's rate. This is fantasy analysis. I could never raise the billions required to dual our major A-roads or build light rail through council tax: that's one of the reasons why I can rule out any increase.

For some projects, we can show they meet the government's criteria, put them in my local growth plan and get central funding. For others, we can use planning gain and introduce a Mayoral Community Infrastructure Levy, which helped fund the Elizabeth Line in London. Nor should we ever ignore opportunities to use private financing from pension funds and other long-term investors.

When the combined authority was given gainshare funding, the government intended us to borrow against this guaranteed future income to unlock investment. That's what Sir Andy Street did in Birmingham and he delivered the Commonwealth Games. It's what Ben Houchen did in Tees Valley, saving and expanding Teesside International Airport. Our region has so much potential, yet we have failed to use our funding for its primary purpose. I will use every means necessary to get results.

KEEP MILL ROAD BRIDGE OPEN

HONK
to keep
the
bridge
open



Go Fund Me
to support our



HONK
to keep
the
bridge
open



Roads

Many people have no practical alternative to driving. Let's get our roads moving and end the war on motorists.

Fix our roads

It's currently down to Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council to fix our roads and sort out potholes. Although Cambridgeshire just got another £8.1 million to spend on roads, the Liberal Democrats and Labour have consistently prioritised making it harder to drive, even backing congestion charging. Over four years, they have spent more than double per mile on roads in Cambridge, while diverting funding away from maintenance. So instead of better roads for everyone, the result is more tailbacks and more potholes. Even when repairs take place, the quality of work is often poor. The Mayor has a strong say over the allocation of transport funding. I won't allow fixing our region's roads to be left off the list.

Designate a Key Route Network

Under the government's plans for devolution, the Mayor will be able to designate a Key Route Network across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, taking over control of important roads from the two councils. I will use my power of direction to get our key routes properly funded and moving, which will include reopening Mill Road bridge for normal vehicles.

Mayors are likely to get responsibility for lane rental schemes. This will allow me to charge utility companies for digging up our roads, creating a powerful incentive for them to co-ordinate work and finish jobs quickly. Lots of congestion is caused by our main roads being dug up for days or weeks, with no sense of urgency, despite the massive disruption caused. I can put a stop to it.

Our roads also need to be safe. The A14 still has ‘at-grade’ junctions, like that for Easton, which involve sharp turns from, and into, the carriageways. These remaining junctions need to be upgraded.

Dual our major A-Roads

Local roads haven’t kept pace with our growing population. It is obvious to anyone who drives distances regularly that our major A-roads need to be dual carriageways. I am prioritising three schemes in particular, although I’m open to more: dualling the A47 between Peterborough and Wisbech; dualling the A10 between Ely and Cambridge; and dualling the A141, which involves a potential bypass around Huntingdon and St Ives.

Options for this stretch of **the A47** date back to the business case from 2018, which offset some of the cost by incorporating new flood defences. That case is still sitting with National Highways, whose RIS3 programme is delayed, pending the outcome of the government’s Spending Review, this summer. Successful projects will get underway from April 2026. This is a realistic prospect, with enough time left for me to lobby for immediate funding.

The Department for Transport awarded £2 million for development work on **the A10** Dualling and Junctions (Cambridge to Ely) scheme in 2021. Characteristically, Labour’s Mayor handed it all over to Cambridgeshire County Council, who say that a ‘review of the project to date, including options, packages and policy, is currently underway [with work] likely to begin in 2027 and be fully completed in 2031’. This was ‘likely’ under the Network North framework, but the change of government means it can no longer be assumed or left to a council. I will take back control, get the proposals together and get them approved.

When it comes to **the A141**, the current Mayor hasn’t published the strategic outline business case or even decided on a preferred option. Another of my early priorities will be getting this resolved. There are ways to fund infrastructure beyond the government, but for roads, national funding is always the first option — and it takes a case to make a case.

End the war on motorists

Labour's Mayor has an official target to force 15% of cars off all local roads by 2030, which was backed repeatedly by the Liberal Democrats. Achieving this target in five years is impossible without road charging and closures, which the authority's local transport plan still supports, despite a row and the congestion charge fiasco in Cambridge. Many people have no alternative to using a car for getting about. I want more transport alternatives, like light rail, but I will never punish drivers. So I'll scrap this absurd target on day one and rule out any road or congestion charging, road closures or local-access-only schemes.

Scrap the GCP

The Greater Cambridge Partnership is a disaster: literally, the worst of the Liberal Democrats and Labour combined, because it unites Cambridgeshire County Council, Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council into one misguided transport body.

The GCP tried and failed to impose congestion charging in Cambridge, which was only stopped through a resident uprising. It has succeeded in blocking traffic, not least on Mill Road bridge. Now it's trying to put bonkers busways through unspoilt countryside and impose a universal 20mph speed limit. Only two years of its current term remain, but it's still lashing out at drivers. The GCP's time is up. I will get it scrapped now before it wastes more of your money. Its funding should be transferred to the combined authority.



WiFi

Have letter to English football

GREALISH ATTACKED

11:00 AM

COND

Rail

Rail brings jobs. Our train services need to be faster, more frequent and include more of our market towns.

Connect with faster trains

Right now, it takes longer to get between Cambridge and Peterborough by train than it does to get from either to London. The Ely Area Capacity Enhancement will remove the bottleneck on services outside Ely, where five rail lines feed into a single track.

This project is one of Network Rail's top funding priorities and delivers disproportionate value, making it likely to proceed at the Spending Review. Despite discussion of the benefits concentrating on freight connections, it will also allow significant improvements to passenger routes, not least CrossCountry's jaded and unappealing 55-minute service. The government intends to nationalise the CrossCountry franchise in October 2027, while handing mayors a range of new rail powers. I will use them to ensure much faster Peterborough-Ely-Cambridge trains.

Run earlier and later trains

A good rail service benefits everyone. I know how much this matters in smaller towns and villages with a station, where having to get a taxi instead can be prohibitively expensive. It's also notable how many people working in Cambridge live out as far as King's Lynn, simply because the railway line makes it possible. Mayors will be given a statutory role in governing, managing, planning and developing the rail network, including the right to request the full devolution of local rail services. Besides getting faster, train services need to get people to work in good time and allow them to get back late. That flexibility is exactly what our cities and town centres need, from restaurants to pubs and from theatres to cinemas.

Investigate new stations

Train stations are far from cheap and adding any stops normally has implications for other services. Nevertheless, the new station at Cambridge South is nearing completion. It can be done. I know how much a station would mean in places like Alconbury Weald, where it would transform connectivity for those living at the redeveloped airfield, previously home to RAF Bomber Command and the USAF.

A Peterborough South station has often been mooted and, likewise, a station in the vicinity of Peterborough North would bring huge benefits for Werrington. I can't promise to deliver these stations, but I can promise to investigate them, along with new homes and development that could subsidise the costs involved. Better services will spread the benefits of growth, while easing the housing pressure around Cambridge.

In some cases, it doesn't even take a new station to gain a new service. Reinstating the track on the 'Newmarket Curve' would connect Soham directly to Cambridge.

Deliver the Peterborough Station Quarter

As an MP, I secured £48 million from the government for rebuilding Peterborough's railway station, adding an entrance on the western side of the tracks and aiming to transform the experience of arriving in the city, with a new pedestrianised square. I thought I'd done my bit, so I made the mistake of trusting the council and the combined authority to get on with things. Nothing happened.

After several warnings and a prolonged delay, the full business case was only submitted to the government this year, putting the funding in jeopardy. The project is still rated an 'amber' risk. This lack of urgency has been telling and conveys everything that's wrong about the approach to big infrastructure projects in our region. As Mayor, I will be impatient and relentless about getting spades in the ground — and getting Peterborough's new Station Quarter built and opened.



Light rail

Trams are proven technology. Plenty of schemes in the UK and Europe show what light rail can unlock in Cambridge.

The solution for Cambridge

Cambridge is expanding. The Labour government has continued the growth agenda and is talking about 150,000 new homes. True to form, the GCP's plans revolve around buses, which won't encourage enough people out of their cars and won't work when these bus routes reach the centre. Light rail is a proven and popular solution.

The Cambridge Growth Company is already doing feasibility work, drawing on excellent suggestions from the grassroots campaign, Cambridge Connect. Trams have worked in Manchester, Birmingham and Croydon, as well as smaller European cities like Lausanne, Orléans and Freiburg. I will make light rail for Cambridge a precondition of the government's growth plans.

A better route for East-West rail

Building light rail opens up a new option for East-West rail, which is still predicated on the need for a station at Cambourne. Light rail can connect Cambourne to Cambridge years before East-West rail could arrive. Instead of going via Cambourne, the mainline could take a quicker and cheaper route, much further to the south than planned now or under the previous Bassingbourn option.

This is a potential win-win solution for everyone. It removes the need for the planned route on high embankments through villages like Hardwick and Comberton, while still allowing East-West rail to go directly to Cambridge South. Because it saves money and time, it's also a credible option for the government, Network Rail and the EWR Company to consider; and the savings would be enough to pay for

light rail many times over. As Mayor, I will get this option investigated from day one.

Replace the bonkers busways

The Greater Cambridge Partnership is planning two more guided busways, at huge cost. Its C2C guided busway would cost at least £200 million, run through Madingley Hill and then destroy Coton Orchard, before terminating in the wrong place, at Grange Road. It would be far cheaper to put buses on existing and adapted roads, as work by others shows. Further to the south, the CSET busway would cost £162 million and cut a disfiguring scar through Magog Hills.

I wrote to the Secretary of State, asking her not to approve CSET, and the government has deferred a decision until after the mayoral election. I will stop the C2C and CSET schemes. In both cases, instead of busways, this money could help to fund properly integrated light-rail routes.

March to Wisbech

Wisbech lost its passenger services in the 1960s. Yet the March to Wisbech railway line was used for freight until 2000 and Network Rail's appraisals show that light rail could use the existing route at lower cost, while also being able to navigate the final mile into the town centre. Unfortunately, Labour are opposed to light rail and the current Mayor failed to back an option for reconnecting Wisbech. I want to develop a viable plan. The Fens reservoir would include significant new recreational use, so future visitors and activity could boost the economic case. It's another reason to get the reservoir built sooner.



Buses

Buses provide a lifeline for those who can't drive. The shift to franchising must result in better, viable bus services.

Start with realistic targets

Bus franchising will happen, but it's currently premised on doubling the number of passengers on buses within five years, despite a consistent decline in bus use. This target is unrealistic and the Mayor has already failed to deliver on his promises. I will scrap the target to double bus use by 2030. Instead, we need to focus on routes and convenience. If services are regular and reliable, they will get used more. We can do this, but we need to be realistic.

After getting his contract award wrong, the Mayor had to re-tender seven bus routes earlier this year, delaying their introduction. Now Stagecoach is handing back the No. 9 bus service and merging the 31 and 33 services, after its concerns over costs were ignored. This means that March is set to lose its only bus service to Peterborough this summer. I will change the approach to services, engage with the operators and put things right.

Help our rural areas

The current model for franchising offers nothing for rural areas, which are already badly underserved. For example, there are no regular services at all to the west of the A1, around Brington, Bythorn, Covington, Keyston and Molesworth. None of these villages has a bus and there are another 12 villages that get one bus a day, which means passengers only have about 90 minutes to spend in Huntingdon.

I'm not convinced that the 'Tiger on Demand' alternative is helping those who need it most or proving cost-effective. Asking elderly pensioners to download and book a service through an app isn't the

kind of innovation required, even when there's a call centre option. We need appropriate and accessible solutions, utilising other transport opportunities. Our councils are spending a fortune on taxis for schoolchildren placed out of area, which opens a potential line of discussion. Vehicles can have more than one function and I want to explore partnerships with others, including our existing community transport groups.

Make franchising work

Labour's plans require a much higher precept and heavy borrowing, while placing all the risk on taxpayers. This is unacceptable. One reason that franchising appears so expensive is an insistence on making all buses and taxis zero-emissions by 2030. Most villages would rather have ten buses to the nearest town than two electric buses. I will scrap this requirement and establish an independent review of the franchising business case and operating model.

Revealingly, bus reform is rated as at 'very high' risk of legal challenge in CPCA's corporate risk register because the Mayor has wrecked relations with the bus companies. This must be put right. Alongside the independent review, I will hold a summit of all the bus, coach and community transport operators to address current problems and ensure a proper working relationship. Engagement is the only way to move towards better routes, new solutions and more integrated and flexible tickets.

Help younger passengers

Labour failed to allocate a full budget for the Tiger Pass, so the funding for the Mayor's scheme will run out mid-year. This was deliberate. The Tiger Passes were issued without expiry dates, despite the age limit, because the scheme was always intended to close. I know that young people have appreciated paying less to get on a bus, which has helped not just them, but also their families, financially. I'll create a permanent, reduced-fare travel pass, so that local children and young people can continue to get on a bus for less.



Our environment

Our biggest local challenge is water shortages. Let's improve our resilience and protect our countryside.

Get the Fens reservoir built

Water shortages have become a huge issue for our region. Getting the new Fens reservoir built is essential, but political leadership from the Mayor has been lacking. After I backed the reservoir, the government announced its own support, but we can't wait until the late 2030s for this project to happen. Water credits are a short-term demand measure and are unlikely to work. We need more supply now to end the over-abstraction of water from our chalk aquifers, which is harming local nature and Cambridgeshire's rare chalk streams. That means building the Fens reservoir and then developing more schemes to manage new demand.

This is a strategic planning requirement. Fortunately, the growth ambitions for Cambridge make this action achievable. The Grafham Transfer scheme would only help until 2040, but that gains useful time for other options to be implemented. There is interesting potential for networks of mini-reservoirs, which East Cambridgeshire District Council is exploring.

Action on flooding

At a regional level, there has been too much focus on carbon reduction and too little on dealing with the practical consequences of climate change. Net Zero is not going to be reached by 2050. We need to protect local communities from extreme weather, particularly heavy rainfall that can cause flooding. A third of the Fens are categorised as being vulnerable, flood-risk zones and much of the region is low-lying. There is a role for the Mayor in ensuring that our internal drainage boards get more support, after comparative neglect by Cambridgeshire County Council. I want action to improve local

pumping stations and to introduce more surface water and flood alleviation schemes, alongside better warning systems.

Improve resilience

Exceptional weather also involves drought and extreme temperatures. Roads built on peat-based soils expand and contract significantly as they move through the seasons, suffering damage when the soil dries out. Patching hasn't worked, so new approaches are needed for maintenance and replacement surfaces.

Our local electricity supply is often worryingly close to headroom capacity at peak hours, with the Brington, Exning, Guyhirn and Kimbolton substations already overloaded. This puts us at risk of blackouts and also constitutes a significant barrier to growth. Improving our capacity and resilience should be the main purpose of the new local area energy plan. Under devolution, the Mayor will also have a new role within the local resilience forum, the multi-agency partnership that plans for and responds to emergencies.

Protect our farmland from solar panels

Farms make up almost 80% of local land, producing a huge variety of food. The Fens 'breadbasket' alone is home to half of the country's grade 1 agricultural land. Our prime farmland is an important resource and shouldn't be sacrificed for solar panels or more wind turbines. My spatial development strategy will protect local farmland from these threats. However, any scheme that the government designates as a nationally significant infrastructure project will be decided by the Energy Secretary, not me. He already approved the Sunnica scheme and other proposals, like Kingsway and East Park, could be next.

I will provide support, resource and attention for local campaigns to maximise the chance of solar schemes being rejected. Safety concerns around the battery storage systems being used are mounting. The Energy Secretary's ideological approach to solar energy is also coming under increasing pressure from the economic reality of the energy markets. With local support and a Mayor who is leading the charge, we can still save our farmland.

Create more natural habitats

Much of our local countryside is glorious, but surprisingly little is actually managed as space for wildlife and biodiversity. This also limits public access and recreation. The combined authority has a statutory duty to produce a local nature recovery plan, but Labour's Mayor handed all the work over to Cambridgeshire County Council. I will take the process seriously, adopt a plan and use development opportunities to increase the number of natural habitats.



Places

What's local matters. Our cities and market towns are focal points for jobs, culture and amenities. We need to back them.

Bring back free parking

Our local centres need footfall to stay alive. Some have free parking, like Ely, thanks to East Cambridgeshire District Council. However, most market towns have expensive charges. For Peterborough and places like Huntingdon and St Neots, the cost of parking means customers lost to retail parks and online competition.

We need to back our local shops. I will offer funding to these councils and work with them to deliver free parking, whether that's for particular sites, particular days or across the board. Combined with a zero-tolerance approach to anti-social behaviour, free parking would be massive step forward. Peterborough City Council has already said it would be willing to work with me to design a scheme.

Local schemes for active travel

Almost everyone agrees that walking, cycling and other forms of active travel are a good thing. These types of projects are, typically, better handled at a local level by councils, rather than by the combined authority, which should be focused on schemes of strategic significance. However, there is a role for the Mayor in ensuring that active travel is properly considered when new developments are being planned and funding is allocated. Got right, cycle lanes are another good thing, allowing more people to cycle safely. It's also fair to say that certain schemes have been intrusive and underused, prompting an unhelpful backlash against new provision. Councils need to get the balance right and accurately predict demand.

Cambridge growth

We have a rare thing in Cambridge: truly world-leading research and technological innovation, particularly in the life sciences. This merits the government's interest. The growth plans for Cambridge should be about helping these specialisms thrive, with new facilities and infrastructure-led development, rather than revolving around the target for 150,000 new homes.

I will help the government achieve its ambitions, provided it agrees to this approach and commits to a light rail network, getting the Fens reservoir built now and expanding the A&E at Addenbrooke's. Success requires working together. The Cambridge Growth Company has started well, but the risk of a democratic deficit is growing, with the current Mayor left sitting on an advisory panel. When it comes to options for delivering major sites, rather than giving powers to an unaccountable body, the best answer is the existing legal framework for Mayoral Development Corporations and involving local communities.

A community stadium for Peterborough

I want to see a new Peterborough Community Stadium built in the city centre, which would act as a concert venue and a community hub. It's happened in Brentford and York, where the facilities even include a new swimming pool. Birmingham City has ambitious plans for an entire Sports Quarter. Peterborough United are keen to make a new stadium happen here.

The Posh have long been interested in the embankment and signed a memorandum of understanding with Peterborough City Council back in 2020. However, the Labour group on the council opposed the plan. Subsequent changes in control have led to deadlock under both Peterborough First and Labour, with no consensus on where a new stadium should go.

As Mayor, I will have the powers necessary to break the deadlock. A new community stadium would be a fantastic boost for Peterborough. Beyond the economic boost and the boost to the football club, it also offers a way to replace our regional swimming pool. It's time.



Vistry Group

Country's Penetration
ovis lomas
Part of the Vistry Group

Planning and homes

Let's spread growth to meet need. We should plan around transport infrastructure and help local renters to own.

Get planning powers

I will adopt a spatial development strategy as soon as possible. This will unlock the new powers on planning, including the ability to place a Mayoral Community Infrastructure Levy on significant schemes. This is the best way to ensure that new homes are built, with the infrastructure we need, while protecting our countryside. My strategy will override the local plans being developed by our councils and Greater Cambridge Shared Planning. It will also require them to genuinely consult and engage with our communities.

For example, Peterborough City Council seems determined to allocate 3,000 homes next to a nature reserve, just north of Castor, in its next local plan. The site lacks the infrastructure needed and the allocation flies in the face of previous environmental assessments, but Homes England owns the land. My strategy won't be dictated by the government or by vested interests. I want existing residents to feel a direct benefit of any growth in their areas, while using transport connections to spread the load across our region.

Build neighbourhoods that people like

Cambridgeshire has seen some prominent examples of how not to build, most notoriously at Northstowe, which a BBC headline described as being 'the broken-promise new town built with no heart'. Northstowe's problem was the lack of a single shop, café, pub or facility. This is slowly being addressed, but it was hardly the way to enthuse people about moving there.

New housing can often seem soulless or even ugly, departing from traditional styles, patterns and streetscapes. Another recurring gripe

is too many ‘rabbit-hutch’ flats. Although these criticisms can be overdone, and the trend is improving, I want us to build neighbourhoods that are genuinely attractive in appearance and have a sense of community. We can still do better.

Give renters a chance to own

Most people don’t want to rent. For them, affordable housing means a home that they can afford to buy. Although building more homes will lower rents, if that’s all we do, we are unlikely to allow a priced-out renter in St Neots or King’s Hedges to own for themselves. Nor could many private renters ever imagine qualifying for a social-rent property (what we used to call ‘council housing’) given the criteria now used.

I want home ownership to be put within reach of every local person with a job, using a discount market sale product — the same idea that lay behind £100k homes. What kind of affordable homes funding I will get from the government is unclear, but regardless of funding, I will be able to work with developers on including these discounted homes within the planning agreements for new sites.

Use planning gain

Development needs to be infrastructure-led and, when that happens, development can pay for infrastructure. The Northern Line extension in London was privately funded, with an initial public loan that’s being paid off by developer contributions. Many things are possible. A new road, station or light-rail line raises the value of any undeveloped land around it and this gain can be harnessed. The government’s reforms to compulsory purchase rules increase the potential for funding infrastructure this way, alongside a Mayoral Community Infrastructure Levy on new development. I will always try to use planning gain ahead of options like placing a levy on business rates.

Improve digital connectivity

Mobile data signals in much of our region are poor. It’s not just a rural issue: stand in the middle of Ely and you’ll struggle to download anything. The combined authority recently spent £500,000 on a digital connectivity project. Yet instead of work to improve people’s data signal or broadband, this project is addressing the ‘climate

mitigation and adaptation' of data. Our phones can't download on a virtue signal. I will concentrate resource on the real data-connectivity problems that we face, particularly getting better 4G and 5G mobile capacity.



Business and skills

Skills funding needs to give more people the ability to get and hold a job, in partnership with local employers.

Get people into work

The purpose of adult skills funding should be to get people into a job. That also means training that gets some workers into a better job. But unless our region's training leads directly to employment or higher pay, we aren't helping. At the moment, the authority is mostly passporting cash to existing providers, while only starting to commission beyond them and to track whether someone on a widget-making course actually has a widget-based job a few years later (widgets being proverbial, of course).

Supported employment funding is being devolved to mayors, but not provision for 16–19 year-olds, which involves many of the same local providers as other skills funding. This constrains some options and choices. The removal of ringfencing on grants is likely to offer the biggest opportunities to improve outcomes. I want our funding to change people's chances in life.

Providers and apprenticeships

Getting ARU Peterborough open was a great moment. Now in its third phase, the university is focused on technical and STEM subjects, giving young people access to higher-wage job opportunities. As Peterborough's MP, I secured £32 million of levelling-up funding from the government to make it happen. Most of those attending are from PE postcodes, proving the local value of the university and its fit with Peterborough's advanced manufacturing employers. We need to extend this kind of success within adult skills, particularly for areas in our region that lag behind. I also want to see more internships and apprenticeships in our growth sectors.

Match skills with the growth agenda

I will commission an independent review of adult skills provision, ensuring that it exploits devolution and is aligned with need and with potential employment opportunities. Growth means new jobs, whether that's in construction, or with businesses that expand or relocate here, or across a multitude of ancillary functions. A share of these new jobs should be going to people who already live here, from bricklayers to lab technicians and beyond. We need to align our skills provision accordingly, working with employers at every stage. I also want to establish Work Match schemes for large construction projects and our biggest companies.

Back winners, don't pick them

Picking winners can easily go wrong. The authority should not be acting as a venture capital fund, particularly given the risks of early-stage investing. I will pause and reevaluate all activity and funding of this kind, including the Strategic Investment & Innovation Fund, the Business Growth & Social Impact Fund, the Social Impact Investment Fund, the Greater Cambridge Impact Investment Fund and all holdings in Start Codon, the accelerators, joint ventures and other companies.

The authority should be creating a framework within which specific sectors and businesses can succeed, not risking taxpayers' money on individual loans, subsidies or investments. Let's back local winners, rather than trying to pick them.

Do fewer things better

There are too many projects making too little difference. That's not to say they are bad ideas or bad projects but, to make a real impact, the authority needs to do fewer things better. This applies particularly to business and third-sector initiatives.

We also need to prevent 'everythingism', as the tendency has recently been dubbed. There are trade-offs and conflicts between good objectives: we shouldn't try to force one policy to be about others. Unfortunately, terms like 'good growth' or 'inclusive growth' are prime examples. We can and must pursue economic growth. We shouldn't expect this growth to advance sustainability, equality or other worthy goals at the same time and in equal measure.

Policies need to focus on a primary outcome. Other objectives should generally be pursued by other policies, not mythologised into a magic bullet.



The Combined Authority

There is huge potential at CPCA. With clear priorities, structures and direction, it can deliver big results for local residents.

A positive workplace

The authority should value excellence and public service, with politics left out of the workplace. People matter and allowing staff to flourish is crucial to CPCA's future success, as it takes on new projects and responsibilities. Although working from home can have benefits, it should never be the default; too much time in a virtual environment makes it harder to build relationships and boost morale, while isolating junior employees. The Mayor should always respect appropriate boundaries on staffing, not least because of the 'bullying behaviour and toxic culture' that developed under Labour. At the same time, I will ensure that basic policies apply across the organisation, with staff recruitment, appraisal and progression based entirely on merit.

No cultural agendas

Too often, we see public authorities indulge in cultural agendas. From barmy HR policies like five-days-pay for four-days-work at South Cambridgeshire District Council to Cambridge City Council promoting Veganuary, this might not involve party politics, but it's political. It's not the role of CPCA to change society, redress inequalities or tell people what to think. The authority's task is to make some big things work better, so we can get Cambridgeshire and Peterborough moving. That will spread opportunity.

If I win, the politics can be left to me. There will be no pronouns in email signatures, no equality, equity or diversity officers and no campaign-based months, weeks or days. Where possible, this will also apply to projects and activity that CPCA funds others to deliver.

Managing change

There is opportunity in all change, not just threat. If the government proceeds with its white paper, there will certainly be upheaval. The constituent councils would drop from seven to a probable two or three, with potential movement of staff dealing with transport and strategic issues. CPCA will become a mayoral strategic authority. Even the authority's logo will need to change, as it represents the seven councils and the business board.

The scope of these changes is down to the government and for them to determine. I see the Mayor's job as being to make the changes work — and, for all the disruption, it will present ways for things to work better, from the Board to service delivery. Getting 'established' status would also bring integrated, multi-year funding, with the ability to request pilot devolution of specific government functions.

Clearer governance

The Mayor is elected to lead the authority and be accountable for its policies. The CPCA Board should act as a check and balance, holding the Mayor to account and preventing any abuse of power. The formal pretence of the Board acting as a cabinet of lead members with portfolios should be abandoned. Instead, where necessary, the Mayor should appoint commissioners and use advisory panels to secure policy leads and expert advice.

This would align better with the government's English Devolution white paper. Specific functions set out in the devolution framework will be exercisable only by the Mayor. For all matters on which the Board holds the Mayor to account, rather than taking the lead, funding should sit within the Mayor's budget. The authority should also cease to be the accountable body for the Greater South East Net Zero Hub, as almost no relevant work is carried out in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. I will hand the hub back to the government.

Transparency

The CPCA website is confusing and outmoded. It needs to explain what the Mayor and authority are doing and spending, with information kept up-to-date, policies made easy to find and decisions

identified, not left strewn across dozens of meeting agenda pages. The website shouldn't leave residents scratching their heads.

Transparency also means both the Board and councillors at the constituent councils having proper access to information. We cannot have a situation in which whistle-blowers come forward, but an independent investigator's report on the Mayor's conduct is kept secret and unpublished.

Priorities and direction

The authority recently adopted a *Shared Vision 2050* document, which is illustrated by cartoons of residents as bug-eyed aliens. After some well-intentioned 'commitments' that veer between the meaningless and the unachievable, it mostly consists of questions. This is not my vision and this document will be reviewed. Nor will the current Corporate Strategy, much of the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan, the Climate Action Plan or many other documents be a basis for policy while I am the Mayor. They are superseded by this manifesto and KPIs will need to be adjusted accordingly. Some more detail on my approach is set out in the appendices.

Business input and committees

A new review of the Business Board is needed, given the loss of its main functions. Its members should not be paid by CPCA and the board should be recast as a Business Panel, reflecting current needs, with proper terms of reference. The structure of CPCA's committees also needs adjustment. Neither the Human Resources Committee nor the Investment Committee conform to the 2017 Order regarding voting rights and the representation of constituent councils. New committee titles are set out in the appendices.



Appendices

A. Principles and values

1. The Mayor is elected to get stuff done. Everything the authority does should be about outcomes.
2. The authority spends taxpayers' money. It should only fund what the Mayor and Board can justify to local people.
3. Beyond its legal requirements, the authority should only do things that it can do well and do better than others.
4. For each area of responsibility, the Mayor's priorities will:
 - direct the work of the Executive Team,
 - empower officers to meet them,
 - define success and performance,
 - be reflected in papers and decisions.
5. Doing things well often means doing fewer things better. There are big advantages to concentrating effort and resources.
6. One size needn't fit all. A single approach or policy for the region is often best, but should depend on local circumstances.
7. Policies should focus on a primary purpose, not a wishful composite of aims.
8. The authority should promote excellence and public service. It must never indulge in cultural agendas.
9. Nothing removes the need for judgement and common sense.

Documentation

10. Information should be relevant, accurate, concrete and succinct. There is no excuse for abstract or generic waffle in the authority's documents.
11. Research should help the authority make policy choices or decisions.
12. Choices must be clear, with unwelcome facts stated plainly.
13. Recommendations must be backed by evidence or arguments, not an appeal to consensus views or what other parts of government are doing.

Organisation

14. Innovation and speed are necessary to get results. The authority should be prepared to both start and cancel internal projects quickly.
15. Those in charge of a priority should be given what they need (responsibility, authorisation, work time, resources) to get stuff to happen.
16. Procurement and the use of AI and data can make good staff even more effective.
17. Controls are necessary, but must avoid unnecessary box-ticking and back-covering.
18. Staff recruitment, appraisal and progression must be based entirely on merit.
19. Consultants shouldn't replace expertise within the authority and must add genuine insight, while providing value for money.

B. Purpose

Current	New
<p><i>Mayoral Ambition</i> To have a healthier and more prosperous Combined Authority region.</p>	<p><i>Purpose</i> To get Cambridgeshire and Peterborough moving.</p>
<p><i>Strategic Vision</i> A prosperous and sustainable Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Driven by our values and using our collective voice and strengths, we seek inclusive good growth for an equitable, resilient, healthier, and connected region.</p>	

The new purpose will replace both the ‘Mayoral Ambition’ and the ‘Strategic Vision’ in the Corporate Plan for 2025/26.

C. Strategic objectives

Current	New
Increased connectivity	Connectivity
Achieving good growth	Growth
Achieving ambitious skills and employment opportunities	Jobs
—	Homes
Enabling resilient communities	Resilience
Achieving Best Value and High Performance	Performance

The new objectives will replace the current 'Strategic Objectives' in the Corporate Plan. The descriptions and policies for each objective will be written to align with this manifesto.

D. Committees

Current Committees	New Committee titles
Transport and Infrastructure	Transport
Environment and Sustainable Communities	Growth
Skills and Employment	Skills
Investment	Funding
Human Resources	Staffing

