



Combined Authority Board

19 March 2025

Title:	Monitoring and Evaluation Framework
Report of:	Jules Ient, Head of Policy, Insight and Performance
Lead Member:	Cllr Edna Murphy, Lead Member Governance
Public Report:	Yes
Key Decision:	No
Voting Arrangements:	A simple majority of all Members present and voting

Recommendations:

A	Approve the refreshed Monitoring and Evaluation Framework
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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 Monitoring and Evaluation Framework will help to demonstrate project and programme impact, outcomes and outputs contributing to all five strategic objectives, strengthening scrutiny and accountability in line with expectations outlined in the [English Devolution Accountability Framework](#).

1. Purpose

1.1	The draft refreshed Monitoring and Evaluation Framework is presented in Appendix A for approval.
1.2	The purpose of the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (MEF) is to set out how the Combined Authority will effectively and consistently monitor and evaluate project and programme performance and is a key tool to successfully embedding the Single Assurance Framework .
1.3	Section 2 sets out the proposal for the draft MEF which is attached as Appendix A. Sections 2.1 to 2.5 describe how the updated framework will support evidence-based decisions. This includes details of how the MEF aligns with the Single Assurance Framework (SAF) and Performance Management Framework (PMF). Sections 2.6 to 2.9 provide information on other strategies and work that have informed the MEF, including lessons learned from the Mid-Term report stage of the second Gateway Review, government

	<p>guidance, the Combined Authority's Corporate Strategy and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Shared Ambition.</p> <p>Section 2.10 and 2.11 sets out the key principles of the MEF and the approach to working in partnership on project delivery, monitoring and evaluation.</p> <p>Sections 2.12 to 2.14 highlights how the MEF has been developed using a strong partnership approach with relevant stakeholders, incorporating best practice through peer reviews and extensive engagement. The Combined Authority will continue to take a test and learn approach through collaboration with project managers, teams and partners.</p>
1.4	Section 3 sets out the Combined Authority's proposed next steps to implement and embed the framework. This includes plans to develop a Monitoring and Evaluation Procedure, plans for staff training and engagement and details of how the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework will be reviewed.
1.5	Section 4 sets out the background to the paper including reference to the previous Monitoring and Evaluation Framework published in 2021, the SAF and PMF.

2. Proposal

2.1	<p>Together, monitoring and evaluation form a significant part of the feedback loop to inform future policy development, priorities and budgets, and support an evidence-based approach to decision making. The updated framework provided in Appendix A has been refreshed to align with the Single Assurance Framework (SAF) and the Performance Management Framework (PMF) and is relevant for internal staff and external partners delivering SAF projects.</p>
2.2	Monitoring supports the consistent tracking of progress of projects and programmes, ensuring that intended outputs are being achieved and that potential corrective action is assessed and taken where progress is off track.
2.3	<p>Evaluation quantifies and assesses outcomes and impact, including how the work was delivered and whether the investment delivered value for money. It can improve future projects and programmes as well as those currently in delivery through lessons learned exercises. It also enables transparency and accountability.</p> <p>There are different levels and types of evaluation. Having a clear idea about the questions that need to be addressed and the required type(s) of evaluation will help inform the evaluation design and resource allocation. Process evaluations assess whether a project or programme is being implemented as intended and/or what is working more or less well, and why. Progress evaluations are used to report on progress that interventions have made in their delivery, for example, progress against project milestones and spend profile, and outputs and intermediate outcomes.</p>
2.4	In implementing this refreshed framework, the Combined Authority will ensure there is a balance between the benefits of completing high-quality, tailored monitoring and evaluation and available resources. A pragmatic and proportionate approach will be adopted. The framework is flexible and recognises that one size does not fit all. In planning monitoring and evaluation, key factors such as available resources, political significance, the scale of investment and expected benefits of each project or programme need to be taken into account.
2.5	<p>Policy Alignment</p> <p>The MEF and PMF work in close alignment with the SAF, which sets out the processes, approach and criteria for demonstrating robust assurance, appraisal and value for money considerations in place to develop and deliver projects/programmes to a high standard. Project reporting requirements set out in the PMF are reflected in this framework and guidance on evaluation levels aligns with the levels set out in the SAF. This maximises the opportunity to realise benefits while ensuring effective stewardship of public funds.</p>
2.6	<p>Risk Management</p> <p>The development of the MEF is noted as a control against the "Failure to deliver work programmes within budget and planned timeframes" (CRR0012) corporate risk in the Combined Authority's Risk</p>

	Register. This risk was reported as having a medium residual risk in the Risk Report to Audit and Governance Committee in February 2025.
2.7	<p>Responding to Lessons Learnt</p> <p>Lessons learned from the Mid-Term Report stage of the second Gateway Review published in October 2024, and the development of the Gateway Review’s Local Evaluation Framework, have also informed the approach to monitoring and evaluation featured in this refreshed framework. For example, one of the key themes identified through the lessons learned exercise was training and capacity building. The MEF recognises that the Combined Authority needs to have people with the right skills, capabilities and behaviours to enable them to deliver in their role. Staff with monitoring and evaluation responsibilities will be provided with appropriate training.</p>
2.8	<p>Alignment to Government Guidance</p> <p>The MEF is underpinned by a key principle to align to best practice Government guidelines and therefore has been developed in accordance with the HM Treasury’s Magenta (Guidance for Evaluation) and Green (Guidance on Appraisal and Evaluation) Books.</p> <p>Monitoring and evaluation are essential elements of a successful performance management regime, with government guidance on Best Value expecting well-functioning authorities to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in performance and outcomes.</p> <p>The English Devolution White Paper also sets out a requirement for ‘ongoing process and impact evaluation to capture evidence on devolution as it becomes available, looking at delivery and implementation, future trends, and impact in place’. The Paper states that, to deliver devolution successfully, it is vital to build evidence of how best to implement policies over time. Evaluation of policy gives both central and local government insights into what works and how to maximise benefits. The English Devolution White Paper sets out plans to review the outcomes of devolution to date. The Paper also states that government will explore a feasibility study to assess the impact of different devolution commitments.</p>
2.9	<p>Alignment to the Combined Authority Corporate Strategy and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Shared Ambition</p> <p>The Combined Authority Corporate Strategy 2023-26 identifies five strategic objectives and the deliverables that will achieve them. It sets out what success will look like and what has previously been achieved. Effective monitoring and evaluation will ensure that outcomes, plans and measures at all levels of the Combined Authority are aligned to the Corporate Strategy.</p> <p>The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Shared Ambition was adopted in October 2024 and sets out a shared ambition for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough as a place. Progress in achieving the Shared Ambition Outcomes and Commitments will be monitored and evaluated, with regular reporting.</p>
2.10	<p>Key Principles</p> <p>All projects and programmes should follow robust practices. The Combined Authority’s approach to monitoring and evaluation is based on the key principles set out in the diagram below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  Alignment to Government best practice guidelines (e.g. Magenta Book and Green Book).  Monitoring and evaluation to be a core part of all activities, with all projects, strategies and plans subject to meaningful and proportionate monitoring and evaluation.  At the outset, evaluation requirements will be agreed for new projects through the SAF concept / outline business case stages.  Partnership / co-design of monitoring and evaluation for projects and programmes. Clearly defined roles and responsibilities.  Continuous improvement / organisational learning from projects and programmes, including lessons learned and disseminating evaluation data and findings.  Data to be collected once and used many times, with baseline information and evidence base to be consistent across key initiatives.

2.11	<p>Partnership Approach</p> <p>Core to this approach is a commitment to build and maintain strong partnerships with stakeholders. The Combined Authority funds a significant amount of delivery by third parties from the public and private sectors. This means, that whilst the Combined Authority is the accountable body, the detailed delivery approach, day to day management and delivery risk will often be outside the organisation. While responsibility may be delegated to conduct or commission appropriate monitoring and evaluation and to report findings back, the Combined Authority remains accountable for the delivery of the specified outputs and outcomes. Working alongside others is a key element to ensuring that partner-led activities deliver successful monitoring and evaluation and this encourages a feedback loop for continuous improvement.</p>
2.12	<p>Best Practice Review</p> <p>An extensive monitoring and evaluation peer review has been undertaken, comparing the approaches detailed in the Combined Authority's current MEF with those developed by other Combined Authorities. This comparative analysis provided a good foundation for updating the framework.</p>
2.13	<p>Stakeholder Engagement</p> <p>The MEF has been developed by co-design and collaboration with internal and external stakeholders. This has informed critical elements of the approach including definition of the key principles, understanding how current processes work, learning what works well, as well as sharing useful resources, co-developing new templates and completing a review of the draft framework. Stakeholder engagement, awareness and capability is key to the successful implementation and embedding of the framework into the organisation as well as developing future, updated versions.</p> <p>The key groups who have been engaged in the refresh of the framework are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <p>• Partner Working Group (External Stakeholders)</p> <p>A Partner Working Group has been reconvened with Local Authority partners. The group acts as a forum for Assurance, Performance and Risk officers and will be part of a planned community of practice around monitoring and evaluation to share best practice and emerging issues. The group have been critical friends during the development of the framework, providing examples of monitoring and evaluation best practice in other authorities.</p> <p>• Combined Authority Programme Management Office (PMO)</p> <p>The PMO Team within the Combined Authority have co-designed and developed the MEF with the Policy, Insight and Performance Team, to ensure alignment with the SAF. This has included taking part in a workshop to test new templates, review guidance and improve existing resources.</p> <p>• Performance and Evaluation Internal Working Group (Internal Stakeholders)</p> <p>This group was established in November 2024 and comprises Senior Leadership-level stakeholders from across the Combined Authority. The group supports effective and efficient collaboration through an umbrella approach to internal stakeholder engagement. Stakeholders have acted as a sounding board and critical friend to broaden and enrich the approach to monitoring and evaluation internally, ensure alignment of the framework across the organisation and that what is proposed is proportionate and deliverable.</p> <p>• Mayoral Combined Authorities Monitoring and Evaluation Network</p> <p>The MCA Monitoring and Evaluation Network is facilitated by What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth. This engagement forum is a platform to identify emerging or common challenges and provides a learning environment for shared successes. Two authorities that are part of this group have reviewed and provided feedback on this framework as part of a focus group formed by the Combined Authority to review Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks.</p> <p>• What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth (WWCLEG)</p> <p>WWCLEG is an independent organisation hosted by the London School of Economics and Centre for Cities, contracted by the Economic and Social Research Council to help make local growth policy more cost effective. WWCLEG coordinate events and provide training to help Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs) to make better use of evidence in designing and delivering policies. The WWCLEG have been a sounding board in developing this framework.</p>

2.14	<p>Test and Learn</p> <p>A test and learn approach has been taken during the development of the MEF, by implementing improvements as and when identified, where practical. Examples of recent improvements as part of the implementation include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular meetings between Policy, Insight and Performance Team and PMO to review Monitoring and Evaluation Plans and Logic Models from Business Case submissions prior to Investment Panel. • Proactively working with individual Project Managers to improve Monitoring and Evaluation Plans and Logic Models. • Involving the Policy, Insight and Performance Team in the Change Request process. • Policy, Insight and Performance Team working in collaboration with PMO to improve an internal repository to include further detail on monitoring and evaluation information. • Policy, Insight and Performance Team working in collaboration with PMO to review and improve Grant Funding Agreements. • Guidance shared with project managers to assist in selecting evaluation level and type most appropriate to the project or programme.
2.15	<p>Audit and Governance Committee Feedback</p> <p>The draft MEF was reviewed by the Audit and Governance Committee on 21 February 2025. The Committee gave positive feedback and were assured that the Internal Audit Team would be involved in regular reviews of the effectiveness of the Framework. The Committee resolved to endorse the draft MEF for consideration at the Combined Authority Board.</p>

3. Next Steps

3.1	<p>Developing a Monitoring and Evaluation Procedure</p> <p>A detailed procedure is being developed alongside this framework, which will outline the processes to be followed. It will set out tools, techniques, templates and guidance to ensure that the MEF is implemented effectively and in a consistent manner. Processes are being refined by learning from user experiences and collaborating and co-designing content with stakeholders. New documentation will be tested to ensure it works well in real life scenarios, whilst remaining proportionate to the project or programme. An intranet hub will host templates, guidance and resources and past evaluations data.</p>
3.2	<p>Staff Training and Engagement</p> <p>Effective implementation and embedding of the framework will require a strong focus on staff training, engagement and awareness. Training is being planned e.g. on Logic Modelling. Community of Practice sessions with stakeholders will be used to share best practice and continue to learn from existing and emerging experiences. Other approaches are being explored, such as identifying “monitoring and evaluation champions” to involve colleagues in the MEF implementation journey, emphasising the value of monitoring and evaluation and ensuring that improved practices are integrated into the organisation and the Combined Authority’s ways of working.</p>
3.3	<p>Regular Review</p> <p>The framework will be reviewed annually by the Internal Audit Team and Audit and Governance Committee to ensure it continues to meet the needs of the Combined Authority and partners. The Combined Authority Board will be accountable for approving any significant amendments to the MEF. The Monitoring and Evaluation Procedure will also be subject to regular review and updating based on the test and learn approach.</p>

4. Background

4.1	<p>The current Monitoring and Evaluation Framework was published in 2021 to align to the Devolution Deal.</p>
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4.2	The Combined Authority's Single Assurance Framework (SAF) and Performance Management Framework (PMF) were approved by the Combined Authority Board in September 2023.
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5. Appendices

5.1	Appendix A – Draft Monitoring and Evaluation Framework
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6. Implications

Financial Implications

6.1	The recommendations above have no direct financial impact. However, implementation of the MEF will provide the Combined Authority with a stronger evidence base, which has the potential to support more effective decision making relating to best value. This may include additional costs relating to commissioning, evaluation and staff training which will be met from within available resources.
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Legal Implications

6.2	<p>This report needs to be seen in the context of the legal and constitutional nature of the Combined Authority itself. Under Section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999 (as amended), the Combined Authority is under a general duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.</p> <p>There are no direct Legal implications as a consequence of the adoption of this framework. Legal support and review will be provided for the work that follows as a result of the adoption of the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.</p>
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Public Health Implications

6.3	This proposal will provide the Combined Authority with a stronger evidence base, which has the potential to support more effective decision making relating to public health impact.
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Environmental & Climate Change Implications

6.4	This proposal will provide the Combined Authority with a stronger evidence base, which has the potential to support more effective decision making relating to environmental and climate change impact.
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Other Significant Implications

6.5	This proposal will provide the Combined Authority with a stronger evidence base, which has the potential to support more effective decision making relating to equality, diversity and inclusion impact.
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Background Papers

6.6	Monitoring and Evaluation Framework published in 2021
6.7	Single Assurance Framework
6.8	Performance Management Framework