A thorough review of progress made so far to establish a dedicated university for Peterborough has concluded that there is a robust plan in place.

The review has also recommended that Peterborough City Council and Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority should consider which academic provider they are partnered with to deliver the university.

The Combined Authority commissioned three separate reviews towards the end of 2018 to determine whether plans for a Peterborough University are achievable and whether the objectives for a new university are being met.

These reviews have allowed the Combined Authority and the city council to review and reflect upon progress made so far, changes that have occurred in the university marketplace, the challenges ahead and the best way forward to deliver a university for Peterborough.

The reviews concluded that:

＞ There is now a robust plan in place to deliver a Peterborough University on time on the Bishop’s Road site on the Embankment. That means 2,000 students by 2022 in an iconic building.

＞ The plan will allow the delivery of a curriculum that meets the needs of both students and employers, and with new and progressive delivery models, such as degree apprenticeships and two-year degree programmes.

＞ The plan includes strategies to potentially raise the amount of revenue and capital funding currently available for the project (£13.83M from the Combined Authority) to as much as £20M.

The findings have led to a recommendation that the city council and Combined Authority consider which academic provider they will partner with to deliver the university between now and September 2022 and beyond. Currently it is University Centre Peterborough (UCP), a joint venture between Peterborough Regional College and Anglia Ruskin University.

Members of the Combined Authority’s Skills Committee will discuss the findings and a way forward at their meeting on Wednesday 3 April 2019.

Councillor John Holdich, chair of the Skills Committee and portfolio holder for skills for the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority, said: “There is a long-standing ambition between public sector partners, employers and the residents of Peterborough and surrounding areas to have a university in the city so I am pleased that the reviews which have taken place show that we have a robust plan in place to achieve that.

“What is important now is that we ensure we are partnered with the best, most progressive and innovative academic partner to make this happen. I expect that both Peterborough Regional College and Anglia Ruskin University will be part of the selection process alongside other higher education providers.

“I am confident that the partner we choose will deliver the university that Peterborough needs and that the people of the city deserve.

“Establishing a university is the single biggest thing we can do to stop our talented young people from leaving to build their lives elsewhere and ensures that our businesses have a good crop of people with the skills and talent they need to apply for jobs.”
The Skills Committee at its meeting on 3 April will be asked to recommend to the Combined Authority Board that a selection process is run to determine the best educational partner and that £535,000 is released to progress the project, namely the assessments of the site and progressing planning permission, producing a business case for the building of the new university and securing a contractor to build the university.

If approval is given by the Skills Committee and the Combined Authority Board, there will be the appointment of an expert programme management team which would be in charge of delivering the above.

Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, James Palmer, said: “This review process has provided an invaluable ‘critical friend’ that will help ensure we deliver a unique and exceptional university for Peterborough which has its own degree-awarding powers.

“This will be a technical university and one rooted in the needs of the local economy, supplying the skills demanded by local employers, and helping our young people into well-paid, secure jobs fit for the rapidly evolving, 21st Century workplace.

“The findings of these reviews will help us deliver on those ambitions in what is a very competitive and ever-changing higher education marketplace. Ensuring we follow the right processes to select the best possible academic partner will be an important part of this.

“And I also want to reassure the people of Peterborough that these reviews have in no way altered our target of having up to 2,000 students enrolled at the university by 2022. The timetable remains very much on track.”

The university is ear-marked for a 55 acre site off Bishop’s Road in Peterborough which has been provided by the city council.

An application is also on track for degree awarding powers.

Once up and running, it is envisaged that the university will offer technical qualifications to meet the needs of local businesses as well as degrees/high level apprenticeships in partnership with local industry.