

CALL-IN PROTOCOL

1. Purpose of Call-In and the Protocol
 - 1.1 The purpose of the Call-In process is to identify issues, explore them fully and make informed recommendations based upon a proper consideration of all relevant issues.
 - 1.2 It is vital that a Call-In is perceived to be not only searching and transparent but also equitable, fair and not oppressive. All stakeholders and parties to the process must feel that they have been fairly treated. If they do not then the process and any recommendations arising from it will be diminished.
 - 1.3 A well conducted Call-In process should make everyone feel that they have contributed rather than just been questioned.
2. The Decision to Call-In
 - 2.1 The right to Call-In applies to a decision made by the Cabinet, an individual member of the Cabinet or a Key Decision taken by an officer under delegated authority. In Wigan Key Decisions are taken by the Executive meeting collectively. Individual Executive Members and officers should not be taking Key Decisions unless the situation is one of urgency. Records of Decisions are provided to the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny within two days and they may not be implemented until the expiry of five working days after the publication of the Decision. During that five-day period the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny or six Members of Overview and Scrutiny may require a Call-In. The requirement may manifest itself in two ways, by written notification to the Chief Executive or by a formal motion at Committee which is seconded and supported by four Members in addition to the proposer and seconder. There are urgency exceptions to the right to Call-In. The Chief Executive will endeavour to assist Members of the Committee in requests for information about decisions which could be the subject of a Call-In.
 - 2.2 The written notification or formal motion requiring a Call-In shall specify reason(s) for the Call-In to assist the Decision Taker and Committee Members in preparing for the Committee Meeting
 - 2.3 Once a decision to Call-In has been properly taken then a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should be convened to deal with the matter unless it will be more expeditious to place the matter on the agenda of a scheduled Committee.
3. Issues to be addressed before the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting
 - 3.1 The Decision Taker will be invited to submit a written statement within 20 working days of the Committee unless urgency dictates otherwise. The written statement will specify the decision, the reasons for it and all matters/factors taken into account in making the decision.

- 3.2 The Decision Taker must be able to call in support whomsoever they feel appropriate. The Decision Taker shall notify the Chairman as soon as reasonably possible of the witnesses to be called in support of the decision
- 3.3 In addition to that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will have a view about who they wish to interview. When a decision to Call-In is taken at Committee then the Committee can indicate simultaneously who they wish to interview. Where the decision is taken outside the Committee it might not be realistic to have another Committee meeting to decide who to interview. In these circumstances the Chairman shall consult with the Vice Chairmen and those Members who were a party to the Call-In as to whether any additional witnesses are to be called and any nominations made by Members on that consultation shall be called as witnesses.
- 3.4 The Decision Taker's statement should be published with the agenda of the meeting at which interviews are to take place. It should be an open item unless there are valid press exclusion reasons. Where a decision has been treated as a press excluded item previously then advice will be given upon the relevant issues for the Committee consider as to whether there are valid press exclusion reasons.
- 3.5 If the Chief Executive or the Director of Legal and Property Services believe that dealing with a Call-In as an open item could cause any officer to publicly disclose any matter which would be prejudicial to the Council, or prejudicial to a third party or in breach of a duty of confidentiality then either of them may instruct the officer to give such evidence only in the press and public excluded part of the meeting.

4. Decision as to which Process to follow

- 4.1 The Committee may elect to follow an Informal Process or a Formal Process
- 4.2 The Committee will decide which Process to adopt when it makes a decision to Call-In. When the Call-In decision is taken outside the Committee then the Chairman may determine which process to follow in consultation with the six Members proposing the Call-In.
- 4.3 Whichever process is adopted the Committee will first need to receive advice on whether the Executive Decision was compliant with the Budget and Policy Frameworks. If a Decision was contrary to the Policy Framework or not consistent with the Budget Framework then, should the Committee decide to refer the issue to Council, Council has powers to override the Decision.

5. Informal Process

- 5.1 Following the giving and consideration of legal/financial advice an informal dialogue could follow which must be courteous and relevant. The Chairman has discretion to conduct proceedings.

5.2 At the conclusion of the informal dialogue the Committee should consider which of the following resolutions they wish to adopt:-

- i) Support the Decision
- ii) Support the Decision with recommendations
- iii) Refer to Cabinet
- iv) Refer to Council

6. Formal Process

- 6.1 All those to be interviewed should be present throughout but seated away from the Committee table. It is important that when someone is interviewed they have a full understanding of the Committee's concerns and what other interviewees have said. If someone is not present throughout then they will be disadvantaged in this regard. The process will not have been fair to them and their contribution will be diminished as will any decision of the Committee. There may be some interviewees whose involvement is peripheral and who may leave after interview if they wish and the Committee agrees.
- 6.2 Legal and financial advice should be given and considered.
- 6.3 The proposer of the Call-In may if he/she wishes make a presentation outlining his/her main concerns to help focus issues
- 6.4 Interviewees are to be called to the Committee table one at a time and allowed to make a presentation of up to 5 minutes without interruption. Thereafter Members of the Committee may ask questions. The questions must be courteous and relevant. If an interviewee does not possess knowledge or information to answer a question then he or she must not be pressed.
- 6.5 At the conclusion of each interview the interviewee should be asked if there is anything he/she wishes to add/clarify and should be allowed so to do.
- 6.6 At the conclusion of all interviews all interviewees should be asked if they wish to add or clarify anything and should be allowed so to do.
- 6.7 The Committee considers all relevant matters, debates the issues and decides which of the resolutions set out in 5.2 i) to iv) they wish to adopt.