



Overview and scrutiny: Guide to call-in

What is call-in

Call-in is a mechanism for scrutinising Executive decisions. Overview and scrutiny has the power to ask for an Executive decision to be reconsidered if, during the five working days immediately following an Executive decision, valid concerns are raised about the way in which the decision has been taken, for example that relevant information was not considered. This power is set out in national legislation and arrangements for putting it into practice are in the Council's Constitution.

Making a request to call-in a decision

Executive decisions are published on the Council's website. Following publication of an Executive decision there is a period of five working days during which non-executive councillors can request that the decision be called-in. The decision is not allowed to be implemented until the period of five working days has expired.

Decisions that can be called-in are those of:

- The Executive Board
- A committee of the Executive Board
- An individual Portfolio Holder
- Executive decision made by an Area Committee
- Executive decisions (£50,000 or more) made by an officer under authority delegated by the Leader, Executive Board or a committee of the Executive Board or by an officer to officer sub-delegation of powers within the Council's Scheme of Delegation

with the exception of decisions made under the urgency procedure, which cannot be called-in.

Requests to call-in a decision must be made in writing using the Call-In Request Form and signed by three non-executive councillors. Where a political group comprises only 3 or 2 councillors, and where there are no other minority groups or independent councillors on the Council, the requirement for three councillors to request reconsideration of the decision (call-in) is reduced to 2 (where the group comprises 3 councillors) and to 1 (where the group comprises 2 councillors).

Copies of the Call-In Request Form are available from the Constitutional Services Team (contact details at the end of this Guide).

When requesting a decision is called-in, at least one of the following reasons must be cited, along with further explanation for the reason(s) given:

- The decision is outside the Council's policy and/or budgetary framework
- Inadequate consultation relating to the decision
- Relevant information not considered
- Viable alternatives not considered

- Justification for the decision to be open to challenge on the basis of the evidence considered.

What happens when a request to call-in a decision is received

The Governance Manager is responsible for assessing the validity of call-in requests. If any doubt remains the Monitoring Officer will make the decision on whether the request is valid or not. Defamatory and frivolous requests will be rejected.

At this time, the relevant decision-maker, Portfolio Holder, Director and contact colleague will be informed that implementation of the decision is suspended until the outcome of the call-in has been determined. If the suspended decision relates to a contract or other procurement issue, the Contract Procurement Manager should also be notified.

The Call-In Panel (a sub-committee of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee) is responsible for considering call-in requests. Therefore once a request is considered to be valid, a meeting of the Panel will be scheduled. This meeting must be held within seven working days of the receipt of the request, or at a later date if agreed by the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny.

Meetings of the Call-In Panel

The purpose of the Call-In Panel meeting is to:

- a) Agree that the call-in is valid as set out in the Council's Constitution
- b) Consider whether the Executive decision should be referred back to the decision-maker for further consideration or whether it can be implemented.

Suggested procedure to be followed

When the meeting begins the Chair will:

1. Ask the Panel to agree whether the call-in is valid and agree the parameters for the discussion.
2. Ask the relevant Portfolio Holder (or relevant decision maker) to briefly outline details of, and reasons for their decision [suggested time: 10 minutes]
3. Ask a representative of the councillors who requested the call-in to briefly outline their concerns and reasons for these [suggested time: 10 minutes]
4. Ask the decision maker (and their supporting colleagues) to briefly respond to the points raised [suggested time: 10 minutes]

Members of the Call-In Panel will then discuss the call-in request, the decision and invite the decision taker and the councillors who requested the call-in to respond to any questions raised by the Panel.

The Chair will invite the decision maker and a representative of the councillors who requested the call-in to sum up any final comments [suggested time: 5 minutes each]. Following this, the decision maker (and their supporting colleagues) and the councillors who requested the call-in may leave the meeting if they chose to as they are not required to remain at the meeting during the deliberations.

Focusing on the reasons for the call-in as given in the Call-In Request Form, and based on the evidence from the decision maker and the councillors who requested the call-in, the Panel will then decide to either:

- a) require that the decision is reconsidered, and make recommendation(s) as to what should be taken into consideration; or
- b) agree that the decision does not need to be reconsidered and can be implemented.

In both cases, reasons will be given by the Panel for its decision.

If the Panel agrees that the decision should be reconsidered it can:

- a) refer the decision back to the decision-maker for reconsideration; or
- b) refer the decision to full Council if they feel that the decision made is contrary to the Council's policy and/or budgetary framework.

In addition, the Panel can make other relevant recommendations which will be referred to the relevant Portfolio Holder, or the Executive Board for response.

What happens following the meeting of the Call-In Panel

Following the meeting, the relevant decision-maker, Portfolio Holder, Director and contact colleague will be informed of the outcome of the meeting.

If the Panel decides that the decision does not need to be reconsidered, then it can be implemented immediately.

If the Panel refers the decision back to the decision-maker then it will be reconsidered in light of comments made by the Panel. The decision-maker can decide whether to amend the original decision or not before adopting a final decision. This final decision cannot be subject to further call-in.

Additional recommendations made by the Panel will be treated in the same way as any other recommendations made by overview and scrutiny, and referred to the relevant Portfolio Holder or Executive Board. They will be asked to provide a response to say whether they agree to implement the recommendation(s) and how they intend to do so. Progress on implementation will then be reviewed at a later date. If they decline to implement a recommendation they will be asked to explain why.

Contact information

For further information about call-in, or any other matters related to overview and scrutiny, contact Constitutional Services

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