

The Procedure for Taking Urgent Decisions

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Council's constitution sets out who in the Council has authority to make decisions and the procedures for making those decisions.
- 1.2 Sometimes events will occur which require decisions to be taken urgently.
- 1.3 The Council needs to be able to respond quickly where failure to do so would not be in the public interest.
- 1.4 The procedure for taking urgent decisions, which includes the taking of urgent key decisions, should only be used where failure to take the decision quickly would, or would be likely to, harm the interests of the Council and the public, for example:
 - (a) A service not being provided;
 - (b) The Council breaking the law or financial rules;
 - (c) The public being put at serious risk of harm;
 - (d) The Council suffering financial loss;
 - (e) Consultation deadlines not being met; and/or
 - (f) In the event of a major incident.
- 1.5 The following are not suitable reasons for the use of the procedure:
 - (a) Poor planning;
 - (b) The possibility of embarrassment being caused to an officer or councillor;
 - (c) The possibility of adverse publicity being caused to the Council; and/or
 - (d) In order to circumvent the requirements of Financial Regulations without good cause and justification.

2. Option A – Urgent Decisions by Committee

- 2.1 Where the agenda for the relevant committee has been published, an urgent item may be added to the agenda if it meets the urgency criteria set out in paragraphs 1.3 and 1.4 of this chapter. The chair of the committee will require an explanation before authorisation is given.
- 2.2 Every effort must be made to circulate the urgent report to councillors at least 24 hours before the meeting.

- 2.3 The urgent report will be made available for public inspection as soon as possible.
3. Option B – Calling an Additional Meeting
- 3.1 The issue may be of such significance that it may be more appropriate to call an additional meeting. The procedure for calling additional meetings is set out in the Council Procedure Rules and the Procedure Rules for Committee and Sub-Committee Meetings.
4. Option C – Decision by the Chief Executive
- 4.1 The Chief Executive may take a decision which is normally reserved to committee or another officer, where they believe that the decision is urgent, after first:
- (a) Taking into account the guidelines set out in paragraphs 1.3 and 1.4 of this chapter; and
 - (b) Where possible, seeking the views of the following in respect of the proposed decision:
 - (i) The Chair of the Strategy, Resources and Performance Committee,
 - (ii) The chair and the vice-chair of the relevant committee with authority to take the decision, and
 - (iii) The leaders of all groups
 - (iv) The Monitoring Officer.
- 4.2 The Chief Executive will take into account any views they consider are relevant. The decision is the Chief Executive's alone.
- 4.3 The decision together with the reasons why it is urgent must be recorded in writing. The record of urgent decisions will be held by Democratic Services and will be made available for inspection.
- 4.4 Following the decision, a report will be submitted to the next available relevant committee meeting explaining:
- (i) The decision;
 - (ii) The reasons for it; and
 - (iii) Why the decision was treated as a matter of urgency.
- 4.5 In the absence of the Chief Executive, their responsibilities under this procedure will be delegated to a director and all references to the Chief Executive under this procedure will also apply to that person.