

Rother District Council

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date:	22 April 2024
Title:	Call-In and Urgency Procedures
Report of:	Chief Executive
Ward(s):	All
Purpose of Report:	To inform Members of the use of the call-in and urgency procedures during the period 1 March 2023 to 28 February 2024.
Officer	
Recommendation(s):	It be RESOLVED : That the report be noted.

Introduction

1. In accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Rule 17 (b) of the Constitution, the operation of the provisions relating to call-in and call-in and urgency shall be monitored annually and a report submitted to Council, via the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) and Audit and Standards Committee should there be any proposals for review / change in operating procedures.
2. Attached at Appendix A are extracts from the Constitution of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules 16 (Call-in) and 17 (Call-in and Urgency). This report covers the meetings of the Executive (Cabinet) from 1 March 2023 up until 28 February 2024. In total there have been eight Cabinet meetings held during this period.
3. No Executive decisions have been called-in during the period to which this report relates, and two decisions within the approved budget and policy framework, have been deemed and resolved as urgent decisions.

Call-In

4. As Members may be aware, the call-in procedure is the mechanism by which the OSC can review or challenge decisions made by the Executive, but which are not yet implemented. Executive decisions are usually published within three days of the meeting and those decisions that are subject to the call-in procedure are contained within Part II of the Minutes. The Executive Minutes are published electronically via the website and email notification is sent to all Councillors.
5. Executive decisions come into force and may then be implemented following the expiry of five working days following publication of the Minutes, unless the OSC objects to a decision and calls it in.
6. Any two non-Executive Members, one of whom must have been physically present at the Executive meeting, or the Chair of the OSC can request that a matter be called in. The call-in request must state the reasons for the call-in.

Once a decision is called in, its implementation is held in abeyance until the call-in procedure has been exhausted.

7. Following a call-in request, the OSC is required to meet within five working days in accordance with the procedure. The date and time of the call-in meeting is set by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair of the OSC and key service officers. Previously, call-ins have been considered by both the calling of additional meetings and the scheduled meetings coinciding within the prescribed timescales.

Call-In and Urgency

8. The call-in procedure does not apply to recommendations to Council nor Executive decisions that have been agreed as urgent by the Chair of Council. Urgent decisions that are taken outside of the approved budget and policy framework are also excluded from the call-in arrangements.
9. In agreeing any decision as urgent, the Chair of Council must be satisfied that any delay in the implementation of that decision would seriously prejudice the Council's or the public's interest. The potential time delay between an Executive decision being made, called-in, meeting the requirements of the call-in procedure and finally being implemented could be significant, and, in a worst case scenario, could be as long as six weeks.
10. During the period covered in this report, there have been two Executive decisions within the approved budget and policy framework, which have been designated and resolved as urgent and therefore outside of the call-in arrangements. These were in relation to the UKSPF support for Rye Fisheries, to allow the Council to reassure the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities by 3 May 2023 that it was the intention of the Council to deliver the Rye Fisheries scheme in line with the UK Shared Prosperity Fund investment plan, and in relation to the Rother District Council Public Conveniences Cleaning Contract 2024, to allow the Council to commence the tender process without delay and meet the tight timescales. The table below gives details of the numbers previously designated as urgent in the last three municipal years:

Period	Number of Decisions
March 2021 – February 2022	2
March 2022 – February 2023	0
March 2023 – February 2024	2

11. When preparing reports for the Executive, consideration is given by officers to whether the decision needs to be taken as a matter of urgency having regard to the possible delays that could occur in the implementation of that decision, if it were subject to the call-in procedure. In advance of the Executive Agenda publication, officers endeavour to identify any decision which needs to be taken as urgent, to seek the Chair of Council's permission for this, and to include rationale for the decision being treated as urgent within the report itself.
12. All decisions that are deemed as urgent, and therefore outside the call-in procedure, are reported to full Council at the next available meeting.

Conclusions

13. The call-in procedure continues to operate well, therefore it is not considered necessary to amend the current procedure. Non-Executive Members should continue to have trust and confidence in the call-in process.
14. There have been two occasions during the period to which this report relates, where it has been necessary to use the urgency provision.
15. It is not considered necessary to amend the call-in provisions and the OSC are recommended to note the report. Should Members wish to amend the procedure this would require a recommendation to Council, via the Audit and Standards Committee, as a change to the Council's Constitution and operating procedures.

Risk Management

16. Failure to monitor the operation of the provisions relating to call-in and urgency is in breach of the Constitution and could leave the Council open to criticism.

Other Implications	Applies?	Other Implications	Applies?
Human Rights	No	Equalities and Diversity	No
Crime and Disorder	No	External Consultation	No
Environmental	No	Access to Information	No
Risk Management	Yes	Exempt from publication	No

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Appendices:	Appendix A – Call-in Procedures
Relevant previous Minutes:	N/A
Background Papers:	N/A
Reference Documents:	N/A

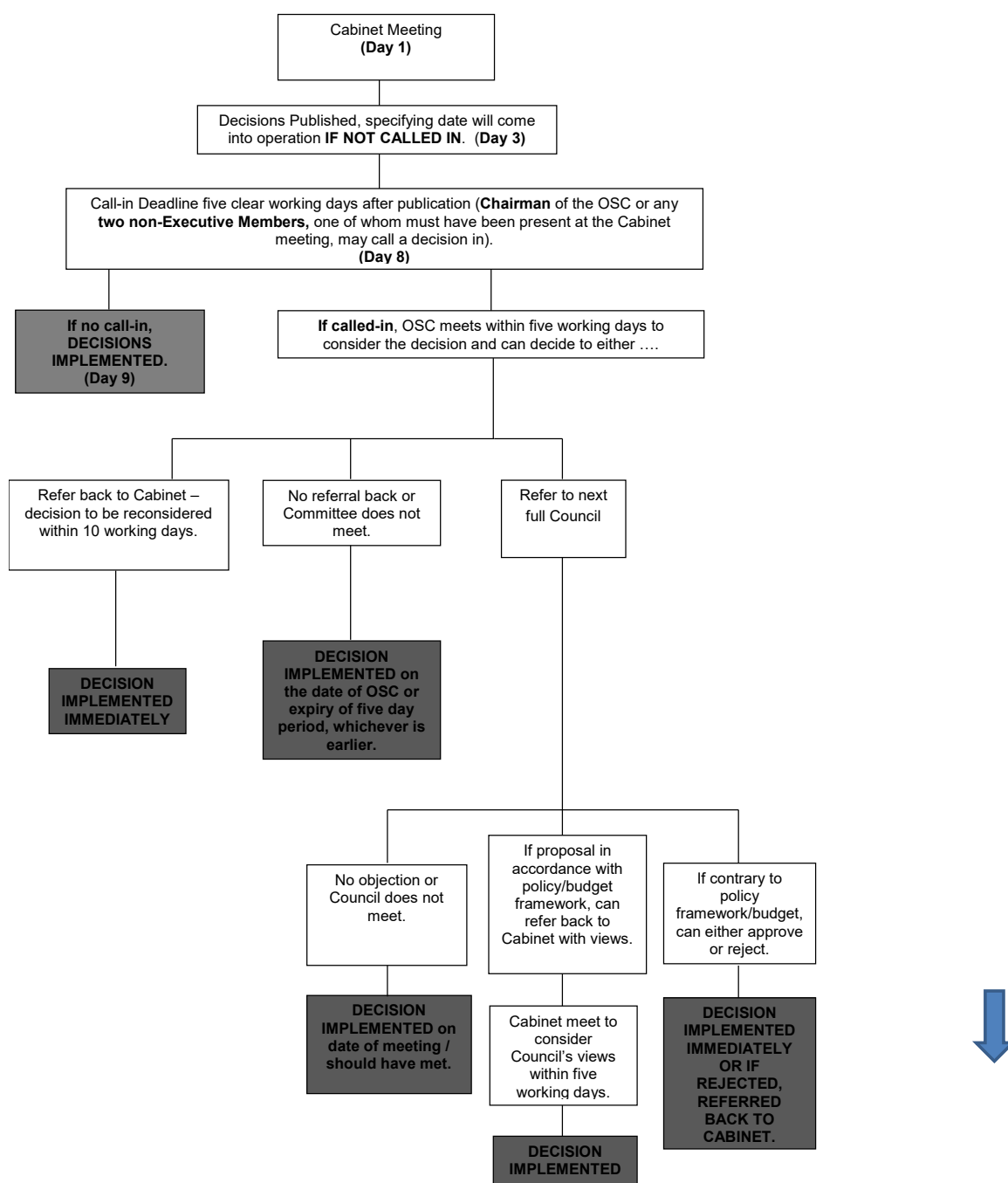
16. Call-In

A flow-chart setting out the following process can be found at the end of this section.

- (a) When a decision is made by the Cabinet or a key decision is made by an officer with delegated authority from the Cabinet, or an area committee or under joint arrangements, the decision shall be published, including where possible by electronic means, and shall be available at the main offices of the Council normally within two working days of being made. The person responsible for publishing the decision will send all Members of the Council copies of the records of all such decisions within the same timescale.
- (b) That record of the decisions will bear the date on which it is published and will specify that the decision will come into force, and may then be implemented, on the expiry of five working days after the publication of the decision, unless the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or any two non-Executive Members objects to it and calls it in.
- (c) During that period, the Head of Paid Service shall call-in a decision for scrutiny by the Committee if so requested by the Chair or any two non-Executive Members, one of whom must have been present at the Cabinet meeting and shall then notify the decision-taker of the call-in. The request for the call-in must state the reasons for the call-in. The Head of Paid Service shall call a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee on such date as they may determine, where possible after consultation with the Chair of the Committee, and in any case within five working days of the decision to call-in.
- (d) If, having considered the decision, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is still concerned about it, then it may refer it back to the decision making person or body for reconsideration, setting out in writing the nature of its concerns or refer the matter to Council. If referred to the decision maker they shall then reconsider within a further 10 working days, amending the decision or not, before adopting a final decision.
- (e) If following an objection to the decision, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee does not meet in the period set out above, or does meet but does not refer the matter back to the decision making person or body, the decision shall take effect on the date of the Overview and Scrutiny meeting, or the expiry of that further five working day period, whichever is the earlier.
- (f) No further action is necessary if the matter has been referred to Council and the Council has not objected; and the decision will be effective in accordance with the provision below. However, if the Council does object, it has no locus to make decisions in respect of an Executive decision unless it is contrary to the policy framework, or contrary to or not wholly consistent with the budget. Unless that is the case, the Council will refer any decision to which it objects back to the decision making person or body, together with the Council's views on the decision. That decision making body or person shall choose whether to amend the decision or not before reaching a final decision and implementing it. Where the decision was taken by the Cabinet as a whole, a meeting will be convened to reconsider within five working days of the Council request. Where the decision was made by an individual, the individual will reconsider within five working days of the Council request.

- (g) If the Council does not meet, or if it does but does not refer the decision back to the decision making body or person, the decision will become effective on the date of the Council meeting or expiry of the period in which the Council meeting should have been held, whichever is the earlier.
- (h) Any decision referred back by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or by Council for reconsideration by Cabinet or the decision-taker(s) shall not be subject to further call-in, whether or not it is altered or adjusted to accommodate some or all of the concerns of the original call-in request.

Call-in Flow Chart



17. Call-In and Urgency

- (a) The call-in procedure set out above shall not apply where the decision being taken by the Cabinet is urgent. A decision will be urgent if any delay likely to

be caused by the call-in process would seriously prejudice the Council's or the public's interests. The record of the decision and notice by which it is made public shall state whether in the opinion of the decision making person or body, the decision is an urgent one, and therefore not subject to call-in. The Chair of the Council must agree both that the decision proposed is reasonable in all the circumstances and to it being treated as a matter of urgency. In the absence of the Chair, the Vice-Chair's consent shall be required. In the absence of both, the Head of Paid Service or their nominee's consent shall be required. Decisions taken as a matter of urgency must be reported to the next available meeting of the Council, together with the reasons for urgency.

- (b) The operation of the provisions relating to call-in and urgency shall be monitored annually, and a report submitted, via the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to Council with proposals for review if necessary.