

Committee Model Review Group

27 February 2025



Report of: Director – Legal and Democratic Services

Title: The Decision Pathway - Update

Ward: All

Recommendations:

That the Committee Model Review Group considers the matters set out in this report.

The significant issues in the report are:

This report provides an update on a number of matters relating to the decision pathway that were raised at the previous meeting of the Committee Model Review Group.



1. Summary

At its meeting on 30 January 2025, the Committee Model Review Group considered the decision pathway and identified a number of matters for further consideration. This report provides an update on specific matters relating to the decision pathway.

2. Key decision threshold

The key decision threshold for policy committees has been the same for over 20 years: a financial threshold of £500,000 or a significant impact on two or more wards. The threshold varies across other authorities of a similar size, with some councils having a higher threshold and some having a lower threshold (with the majority of the core cities having a threshold of £500k).. It should be noted that officer decisions below the financial threshold will be taken in consultation with the relevant Chair of a Policy Committee.

3. Information in key decision reports

It is acknowledged that there is a significant amount of information included in reports to Policy Committees. The balance needs to be struck between ensuring that decision-makers have the right amount of information in the report and that appendices and background information are used effectively. It should be noted that Members have previously agreed that there should be greater use of options in reports.

4. Decision pathway for non-key decision reports

The main responsibility of a Policy Committee is to consider key decisions however there may be occasions when information items need to be brought, although this should usually only be in exceptional cases. Information reports may be added to Policy Committee agendas with relatively short notice because they do not need to be included in the Forward Plans and usually don't require professional comments. It is already the case that information reports are taken to Policy Committees at relatively short notice, following consultation with the Chair.

5. Notes of Policy Committee Chair's briefing

The notes from a Policy Committee Chair's briefing are circulated to all members of the committee within a few days of the briefing to ensure transparency around the matters covered in those briefings. The notes should capture the items on the agenda, key points discussed and any actions. The notes should provide sufficient information to enable members of the Policy Committee to understand the matters that were considered in the briefing.

The Policy Committee Chair's briefings are also used to sign off officer decisions in consultation with the Chair, and details of these are published on the [Council's website](#).

6. Timing of Agenda Setting meetings

It is recognised that the timing of Agenda Setting meetings may need to be changed to enable officers to make any changes to reports before they are published. Currently, these meetings are held less than a week before the publication of the agenda for a Policy Committee. It is recommended that the Agenda Setting meeting should be brought forward by one week, therefore three weeks before the date of the Policy Committee.

7. Publication of diaries for the Leader

The Leader has confirmed that their diary will be published. This is consistent with the previous arrangements to publish the diary of the directed elected Mayor. However, there are currently no plans to publish the diaries of the Deputy Leader or Policy Committee Chairs due to the administrative burden of doing so.

8. Formalise the amendment process

The current process for considering amendments to the recommendations in reports for Policy Committees is informal guidance. The amendment process can be incorporated into the Council's Constitution as part of the Committee Procedure Rules. A summary of the guidance is as follows:

- Cross-party engagement in the preparation of reports through Chair's briefings and Agenda Setting Briefings provides an opportunity for Members to influence the matters that they would like officers to incorporate. For example, further detail in respect of other options, including legal, financial, equalities and other professional comments.
- The submission of proposed amendments in advance of the Policy Committee meeting, ideally at least 3 working days before the date of the meeting will enable officers to prepare relevant professional advice in advance of the meeting.
- Tracked changes to recommendations are to be provided so that it is clear to Members, officers and the public what the amendment will change in the recommendations.
- At the meeting amendments will be considered following the Council's [Rules of Debate](#) as set out in the Constitution.

9. Summary of matters for consideration by the Committee Model Review Group

To summarise, the Committee Model Review Group could consider whether the arrangements for the following matters are effective and whether any changes are required:

- a. To consider whether any changes are needed to the key decision threshold.
- b. To ask officers to review how information is presented in key decision reports, including the use of options, appendices and background information.
- c. To support the principle that non-key decision reports can be prepared at short notice on a case-by-case basis.
- d. To support the principle that the notes from a Policy Committee Chair's briefing should provide sufficient information to enable members of the Policy Committee to understand the matters that were considered in the briefing.
- e. To recommend that Agenda Setting meetings are scheduled three weeks prior to the Policy Committee.
- f. To note that arrangements are being made for the publication of the Leader's diary. However, there are no plans to publish other diaries due to the administrative burden of doing so.
- g. To agree that the process for considering amendments to the recommendations in reports for policy committees should be incorporated into the Committee Procedure Rules.

10. Recommendation

That the Committee Model Review Group considers the matters set out in this report.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Background Papers:

None

Appendices

None