

## **6. Attendance by Executive Members at scrutiny committee meetings (including 'Call-In' meetings)**

- 6.1 Cabinet Members will normally be expected to attend meetings of scrutiny committees, for the purposes of being held to account in relation to decisions taken and to answer questions in relation to proposed decisions that have been included within the Forward Plan.
- 6.2 Cabinet Members are encouraged to avail themselves of every opportunity to gauge the views of non-Executive members on any issues falling within their remit. A close working relationship and an open exchange of views will be of particular importance to the Cabinet Member and scrutiny members, where consideration is being given to the development of the Council's budget or policy framework.
- 6.3 Cabinet Members will normally be expected to attend any meetings of scrutiny committees at which it is intended to consider a Call-In request in relation to his/her area of responsibility.
- 6.4 At meetings where call-ins are being considered, the purpose of the Cabinet Member's attendance is to answer questions of fact and not to present the item. Cabinet Members need to be careful not to be drawn into the debate, so as to avoid any possible allegations of becoming involved in the scrutiny of their own decisions which may bring them into conflict with the Code of Conduct. It is therefore important to draw the distinction between answering questions of fact and becoming involved in the committee debate into the issue in question.
- 6.5 Unless there are extenuating circumstances, the decision maker (or the relevant Cabinet Member if the decision maker is the Executive) should always attend a Call-In meeting. It is accepted however that officers are often better placed to present greater detailed information that led up to the decision and this is deemed to be acceptable although it should always be the decision maker that is held to account.
- 6.6 The following procedure should take place where call-ins are being considered:
  - (i) The Member who called in the decision should speak first.
  - (ii) The Chairman would then invite the Cabinet Member (decision maker) to respond.
  - (iii) The Committee can then ask questions of the decision maker who may ask a relevant officer to supply further information if necessary.
  - (iv) The Committee debates the issue and votes on the outcome.
- 6.7 In the event of a situation where the decision maker cannot attend a Call-In meeting, the Leader of the Council or Deputy Leader should attend in their absence. In the event of both the Leader and Deputy Leader being unavailable, they should nominate another Cabinet Member to attend and be accountable for the decision.