

Report to: Full Council

Date: 15 November 2023

Title: Updating and Alignment of Scheme of Delegations to Officers

Report of: Simon Russell, Monitoring Officer

Ward(s): All

Purpose of report: To set out the need for an updated and aligned Scheme, and to outline key amendments.

Officer recommendation(s): (1) To consider the draft updated and aligned Scheme at Appendix 1 and approve all council delegations.
(2) To note Cabinet’s approval of all executive delegations.

Reasons for recommendations: Eastbourne’s existing Scheme has not been fully updated since 2015, leading to lack of clarity over certain officer powers and difficulty with implementation.

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Council’s Scheme of Delegations to Officers forms part of the constitution and sets out the substance and extent of powers delegated by the executive and full Council to each of the directors, the Monitoring Officer and Head of Legal Services. These delegations relate to officers’ operational powers to perform their routine day to day functions.
- 1.2 Additionally, the Scheme delegates powers to Proper Officers, namely those officers designated under local government legislation to perform ‘proper officer’ functions.
- 1.3 Since the Joint Transformation Programme in 2015, the Council (EBC) and Lewes District Council (LDC) have continued to operate under individual Schemes. The presentation and scope of each one is drafted differently.
- 1.4 This differing approach, in addition to the absence of a much needed update, has led to inconsistencies at corporate level where directors acting across both authorities have sought clarity over the nature and extent of their delegated

powers. Equally, references to 'Proper Officer' legislation require a refresh to ensure only current law is cited.

- 1.5 Whilst updating and alignment is the overriding objective, two individual Schemes will remain, since EBC retains exclusive functions relating to–

Eastbourne Homes Ltd, Devonshire Park culture and tourism, and the Eastbourne Downs Golf Club.

For ease of reference, these are highlighted in blue in the draft Scheme.

LDC retains exclusive functions relating to–

- (i) its development management functions on behalf of South Downs National Park Authority, and
- (ii) its management of Code of Conduct matters in relation to parish councils.

- 1.6 The two Schemes will in all other respects be identical in presentation and content, enabling officers to interpret and apply their powers correctly and consistently across their entire service responsibility and both authorities' geographical areas.

2 Drafting and consultation to date

- 2.1 The Monitoring Officer prepared initial drafts, which he referred to the Corporate Management Team on 14 June 2023 and to the Senior Managers Forum for comment. Their recommended amendments were reflected in a revised draft.

- 2.2 The Eastbourne Constitution Working Group (CWG) met on 23 June 2023 to review the Eastbourne draft Scheme. CWG is a cross-party advisory body with a remit to consider proposed amendments to the constitution and make recommendations to Audit and Governance Committee.

- 2.3 At their meeting, CWG commented on the draft in detail. This included comments about item B44 (the power to place officers at the disposal of other authorities) and C11 (power to manage cultural functions at Devonshire Park). The resulting amendments to these sections are shown in Appendix 1 in tracked format. With these changes in place, the Group was happy to support the draft and refer it to the Council's Audit and Governance Committee.

- 2.4 Since CWG's meeting in June, officers have made minor presentational improvements to the draft, for example listing the Director of Service Delivery's powers as consecutive entries on the Contents list, and adopting a systematic numbering protocol throughout the document. These are included in the tracked changes in Appendix 1.

- 2.5 At its meeting on 5 October 2023, the Audit and Governance Committee – in its capacity to consider proposed governance amendments – reviewed the latest version of the draft.

- 2.6 The only amendment the Committee requested was to the Director of Finance and Performance treasury management powers. In relation to the powers specified in item C42(iv) and (vii), the limitation in column 4 would now read “In the event of the Director of Finance and Performance wishing to depart in any material aspect from the main principles of CIPFA’s Code of Practice, the reasons **must** *[not should]* be disclosed in a report to Cabinet.”
- 2.7 On reviewing the latest draft, officers have identified that the Director of Service Delivery’s delegated powers to exercise the Council’s functions relating to homeless persons (at row C27) should be amplified to expressly include the power to carry out or to arrange to carry out homelessness reviews under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996. Row C27 has been amended accordingly.

3 Proposal

- 3.1 At its meeting on 1 November 2023, Cabinet approved the executive delegations set out in the draft Scheme. Council is asked to note this approval.
- 3.2 Council is invited to accept the Audit and Governance Committee’s recommendation to approve the delegation of all council functions listed in the draft Scheme at Appendix 1.
- 3.2 All functions in the Scheme are executive delegations except those marked with a ‘C’ suffix in the first column; these are Council functions and for approval by full Council only.
- 3.3 Subject to –
- (i) Council approving the council functions at its meeting on 15 November 2023; and
 - (ii) Lewes District Council’s Cabinet and full Council approving respectively the executive and council delegations for its Scheme,
- both authorities’ revised Schemes will come into force once the directors’ existing sub-delegations are aligned to the new parent Schemes.
- 3.4 Part A3 paragraphs (v) and (vi) authorise officers with powers conferred on them by the Schemes to delegate those powers further to another officer under a process known as sub-delegation. Paragraphs (vii) and (viii) set out the conditions under which sub-delegations may operate.
- 3.5 Sub-delegation alignment by the Council’s legal team should be complete by the end of December, allowing the revised Schemes to take effect from 1 January 2024.

4 Summary of Key Changes

4.1 Layout

- Contents list added for ease of reference.
- Scheme opens with principles of interpretation (A) followed by delegations to all chief officers (B), and then to specified chief officers (C).

- Annex A summarises the remits of each chief officer.
- Delegations to Director of Service Delivery now listed sequentially.
- Consistent numbering protocol applied throughout.

4.2 Content amendment

- All references to legislation checked and updated where necessary.
- Repealed legislation is deleted.
- Chief Officers' titles and remits updated.
- Obsolete powers removed.
- Urgency powers added.
- Limitations to exercise of Chief Executive's powers to take urgent action, now requiring pre-notification to the Leader or Deputy Leader where reasonably practicable.
- Chief Officers' powers to determine staff matters at item B43 require consultation with the Director of Tourism, Culture and Organisational Development for the functions listed in the Limitations column.
- Clarification of Chief Finance Officer's treasury management powers.
- Clarification added to the Director of Regeneration and Planning's planning functions.
- Clarification of Assets of Community Value review powers conferred on Head of Legal Services.

5 Outcome expected and performance management

- 5.1 An aligned and updated Scheme should ensure lawful, valid and consistent decision making by directors, the Monitoring Officer and Head of Legal Services across both authority areas.
- 5.2 The Monitoring Officer has authority to make minor administrative amendments (such as job title and statute updates) and may at any time refer substantive amendments to the Council's Constitution Working Group for consideration and referral to Audit and Governance Committee.

6 Consultation

- 6.1 Consultation arrangements are summarised in paragraph 2 above.

7 Corporate plan and council policies

- 7.1 An updated and aligned Scheme will support all elements of the Council's corporate plan, as each director, the Monitoring Officer and Head of Legal Services will have clear, lawful and consistent reference point for delegated decision-making.

8 Business case and alternative option(s) considered.

- 8.1 The Council is under a legal duty to include in its constitution a list of powers exercisable by officers. See further at paragraph 10.

9 Financial appraisal

- 9.1 The cost of updating and managing an updated set of Schemes can be met by the revenue budgets of the Legal and Democratic Services teams.

10 Legal implications

- 10.1 Section 9P (1) of the Local Government Act 2000 requires a council operating executive arrangements to prepare and keep up to date a constitution which contains (amongst other things) “such information as the Secretary of State may direct.” Under the Local Government Act 2000 (Constitution) Direction 2000, the Secretary of State directed that councils must include in their constitution–
- a. a description of those powers of the **executive** which are exercisable by an officer of the local authority, stating the title of the officer by whom each of the powers so specified is exercisable; and
 - b. a description of those powers of the **council** which are exercisable by an officer of the local authority stating the title of the officer by whom each of the powers so specified is for exercisable.
- 10.2 Apart from the record needing to list all powers delegated to specified officers, the document format is not prescribed by statute or common law. It is in the interests of council members, officers and the public, however, that the Scheme is clear and concise. It should also be prefaced by a set of principles as to how the Scheme operates (including arrangements for amending and adding to the Scheme as necessary from time to time) and guidelines by which it should be interpreted.
- 10.3 Section 100G(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 and section 9P(3) of the Local Government Act 2000 require that local authorities make a copy of its constitution available for inspection by members of the public at all reasonable hours. The council satisfies this obligation by publishing its constitution on its website.
- 10.4 The distinction between executive and council functions is specified in the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) Regulations 2000.

11 Risk Management implications

- 11.1 An aligned and updated Scheme provides a sound and proper basis on which directors can exercise powers on a delegated basis. It is no longer tenable for directors to rely on the current Scheme, given its many references to obsolete job titles, repealed legislation and lack of consistency across the shared LDC-EBC areas.
- 11.2 Officer decisions made without proper authority could provide an affected party with grounds to apply for a judicial review.

12 Equality analysis

- 12.1 This proposal will have a positive impact on all staff, including staff with protected characteristics, as it will provide senior officers with a lawful and therefore robust decision-making protocol across both authorities. Subsequently, the risk of a decision being challenged for lack of legitimate power conferred on the decision-maker is minimised.

13 Appendices

- 13.1 Appendix 1 – proposed Scheme of Delegations to Officers, aligned and updated.

14 Background papers

- 14.1 The background papers used in compiling this report were as follows:

- Eastbourne Borough Council's current Scheme of Delegations
[Microsoft Word - part 3_D \(Responsibility for Functions\) \(Section D - Scheme of delegations\) \(Updated April 2023\) \(lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk\)](#)
- Lewes District Council's current Scheme of Delegations
[Microsoft Word - Constitution Part9_T \(Scheme of Delegation\) \(June 2021\) \(lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk\)](#)
- List of functions reserved to full Council
[Microsoft Word - part 2 \(Articles of the Constitution\) \(Dec 2020\) \(lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk\)](#)
[EBC Constitution Part 3B \(lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk\)](#)