

**To:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 22 January 2025  
**Report of:** Scrutiny Committee  
**Title of Report:** Governance changes to address the increase in Urgent Key Decisions

<b>Summary and recommendations</b>	
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	To present the Scrutiny Committee recommendations for Cabinet consideration and decision
<b>Key decision:</b>	No
<b>Scrutiny Lead Member:</b>	Councillor Katherine Miles, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Susan Brown, Leader of the Council
<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	A well-run council
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	n/a
<b>Recommendation: That the Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report.</b>	

<b>Appendices</b>	
Appendix 1	Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee

### **Introduction and overview**

1. The Scrutiny Committee met on 14 January 2025 to consider the Governance changes to address the increase in Urgent Key Decisions. The report recommends that the Committee notes the progress made to date and plans being taken forward in 2025, and agree any recommendations.
2. The Committee was grateful to Emma Jackman, Head of Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer) for attending to present the report and answer questions from the Committee.

### **Summary and recommendations**

3. Emma Jackman, Head of Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer) introduced the report, updating the Committee on progress made and ongoing plans to address

the increase in Urgent Key Decisions taken in 2024. She presented a series of measures aimed at improving and strengthening governance across the Council.

4. The Committee looked at and noted the various measures outlined in the report, which included clarifying the definition of a Key Decision in the Council’s constitution, revising the Forward Plan and report templates to include clearer guidance for users, delivery of training sessions for senior management and staff across various services, and the introduction of mandatory e-learning modules for all staff. The Committee also noted efforts being made to align the governance practices of Council-owned companies through training arrangements tailored to them.
5. Members of the Committee asked questions relating to the specifics of staff training and how continued compliance could be maintained. Questions were also raised about the gaps in governance practices between the Council and its companies, as well as trends that might explain the increase in urgent key decisions.
6. The Committee sought clarification on timelines and the implementation of mandatory training, asking whether a two-year refresh cycle was the right approach. Members wondered if more frequent monitoring mechanisms could be introduced to ensure consistent compliance across the board.
7. Another area of focus was the transition involving the appointment of a new Company Secretary in the Council-owned companies. The Committee noted the need to avoid governance gaps during such transitions and highlighted the importance of aligned governance standards between the Council and its companies.
8. Lastly, the Committee discussed the importance of analysing trends that result in urgent key decisions being taken, highlighting the need to distinguish between unavoidable circumstances and capacity-related challenges. The Committee suggested implementing better data collection and reporting would help provide a clear picture for ongoing scrutiny.

***Recommendation 1: That Cabinet supports the continued implementation and embedding of the actions proposed to mitigate the increased number of Urgent Key Decisions taken.***

***Recommendation 2: That Officers ensure an end-of-year report is submitted to the Scrutiny Committee, reporting the number and nature of urgent key decisions taken, including data to track trends and evaluate distinctions between capacity-related and unavoidable issues.***

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