

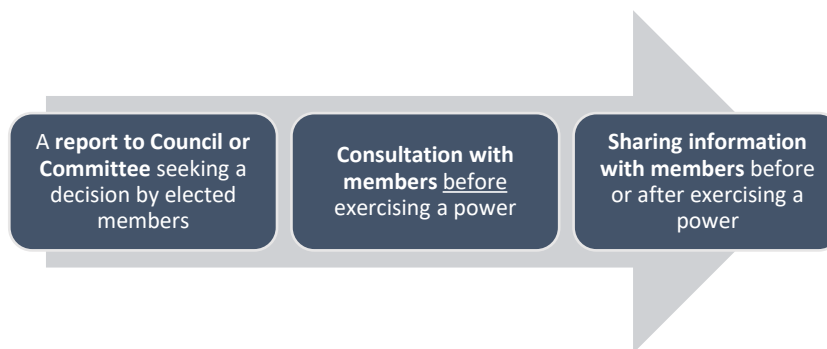
Delegated Powers and Political Sensitivity

Guidance for Officers (1 April 2026)

Principle 6 of the Powers Delegated to Officers provides as follows, albeit in the form of a guideline rather than a mandatory requirement:

In considering the possible exercise of such a power [i.e. a delegated power], the relevant officers should be mindful of any potential for political sensitivity or controversy and, where appropriate, should consider consulting with elected members or referring the matter to Council or one of its Committees or Sub-Committees. Some of the powers contained herein expressly require consultation with elected members.

Matters covered by our Powers Delegated to Officers may be politically sensitive enough to warrant one or more of the following courses of action:



This guidance supports you with your decision and the process you should follow.

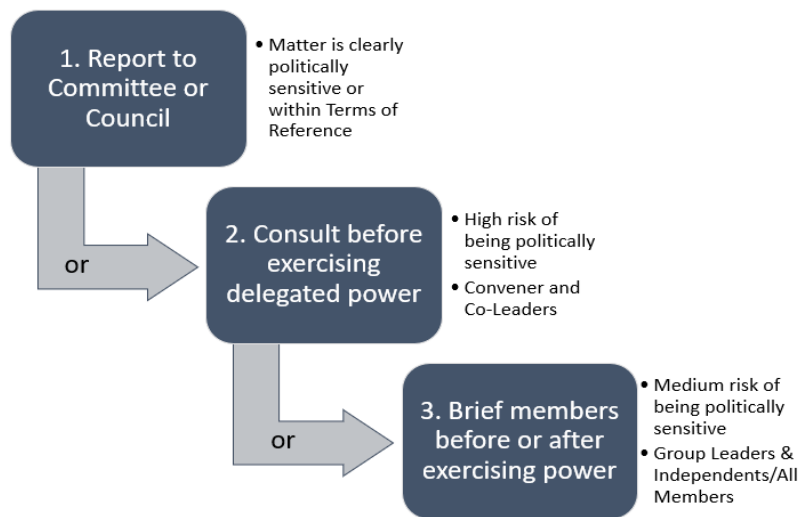
This document is not part of the Powers Delegated to Officers, nor the wider Scheme of Governance. It is instead a guidance and advisory resource to support you in your operation of the Powers Delegated to Officers within the Scheme of Governance.

What should I think about?

In deciding whether a matter (e.g. service change, government consultation, exercise of statutory power or discretion) is politically sensitive enough to warrant either a report to Council or committee for a decision by elected members, or consultation with some (or all) elected members, rather than simply exercising the power in question, you should consider the following questions:

1. Does the matter involve significant deviation from the Council's approved risk appetite statement?
2. Is there a significant impact on public safety, safeguarding or resilience in Aberdeen?
3. Does it significantly impact, or have the clear potential to significantly impact, particular wards or vulnerable groups disproportionately?
4. Is there clear potential to significantly impact the results of an upcoming election or referendum?
5. Does it involve levels of financial, commercial or legal risk significantly greater than those normally encountered by officers in the course of their duties?
6. Is there clear potential to cause significant reputational damage to Aberdeen City Council or significant impact on trust in public services?
7. Does it appear likely to generate political controversy nationally or locally (e.g. where there is a clear policy difference between political groups) or significant public interest, media attention or stakeholder concern at a national or local level?

This is **not an exhaustive list of considerations** and these should individually be considered as indicators of political sensitivity. Should you consider that a matter is (or is likely to be) politically-sensitive, you should where appropriate discuss the matter with your Chief Officer/Executive Director before exercising your power(s) and determine which course of action is required. Advice can also be sought from the Chief Officer – Governance.



1. If your decision is to report to Council or committee seeking a decision by elected members, follow the consultation process applicable to draft Council or committee reports as set out in Standing Order 13.

2. If your decision is to consult with members before exercising the power –

- Take into consideration the urgency of the matter, and the proportionality and practicality of differing levels of consultation.
- If consultation is not a condition of the delegation but you consider it may be wise to seek views from member(s), you should contact the relevant Convener and Co-Leaders in the first instance.
- Where the matter also has (or would have) a "*significant local impact*" (as defined in the Standing Orders) on a particular ward, you may wish to consult with local ward Members, in addition to the Co-Leaders and relevant Convener

3. If your decision is to share information with a wider group of elected members before or after you exercise your delegated power –

- Consider the merits of sharing information with Group Leaders and independent members, or alternatively, with all elected members.
- Consider timing and the method of sharing information. You may wish to email Group Leaders and independent members and ask them to share with their colleagues. You may consider it more appropriate to email all members. You may wish to do both, in sequence.
- This option may be taken in conjunction with option 2, where consultation with the Co-Leaders and relevant Convenor has taken place, and thereafter a decision is taken to share the information with a wider group of Elected Members.

Am I 'consulting' or sharing information?

Our Standing Orders set down rules for **consultation** on committee reports and our Powers Delegated to Officers provide that some delegated powers can only be exercised after consultation with elected member(s). In referring to consultation with elected members, this document (like the Powers Delegated to Officers) is referring to seeking the views of members prior to the potential exercise by officers of delegated powers. Consultation is intended to inform decision making in this case.

Officers may take the decision that it is more appropriate in the circumstances to brief, or **share information** with, elected members, either before or after a delegated power has been exercised, particularly on operational matters which they consider to be politically sensitive. This does not inform decision making but keeps elected members informed on matters which may be considered politically sensitive.

Occasionally the **extreme urgency** of a politically-sensitive matter may mean that neither reporting nor consultation is practicable – in which case an officer will require to exercise a delegated power and notify elected members afterwards.