



## **The work of Cabinet**

Cabinet (or the Executive) is made up of the Leader of the Council (the political head of Hart) and other executive Members.

Council elects the Leader of the Council for four years at the Annual Council Meeting. The Leader then appoints up to nine other executive Members to assist him/her. The Leader can also allocate specific service responsibilities to these Members, called Portfolios, for which they are individually responsible.

Cabinet meets once a month and all Members of the Council can attend, if they wish.

The Leader and Executive Members, either collectively in Cabinet or individually, can make executive decisions that usually relate to the day-to-day running of the Council. Key decisions (affecting more than two wards in the district or involving a significant amount of funds) that are due to be made by the Cabinet are published in the Work Programme as part of the Cabinet papers every month.

Cabinet can also receive recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Cabinet meets in public and members of the public may, with prior notice, make statements at the meeting.

## **The work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

The non-executive Members of the Council have a very important role to play. They not only act as community advocates, bringing into Hart the ideas and needs of the community to help the Council develop policy, but they are also required to scrutinise the decisions made by the executive Members. Hart has created the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for this role.

It ensures that the Cabinet is publicly held to account and seeks to promote transparent decision making. It acts as a critical friend. The Committee also has a role in scrutinising other external organisations.

The main responsibilities of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are to:

- review and/or scrutinise decisions made or actions taken in connection with the discharge of any of the Council's functions.
- make reports and/or recommendations to the full Council and/or the Executive

and/or any policy, joint or area Committee in connection with the discharge of any functions.

- consider any matter affecting the area or its inhabitants
- exercise the right to call-in for reconsideration, decisions made but not yet implemented by the Executive and/or any policy or area Committees

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is made up of 11 non-executive Members appointed to reflect the overall political make-up of the Council. The Committee can co-opt additional non-voting members who could be experts or members of the public etc on a permanent or ad-hoc basis, for example, to help with a particular review.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is open to the public and is a more informal body than other Committees of the Council. The public can participate if they wish to raise specific issues related to items on the agenda.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has the power to request council officers and Cabinet Members to appear before them. Officers are expected to respond openly to questions from the Committee and provide information they feel would be useful to Members.

The Committee sets its own annual work programme and reports on its activities at the end of a municipal year,

## **What is Calling In a decision?**

If Overview and Scrutiny Members believe that, for example, a decision made by Cabinet is contrary to the policy of the Council, they can fulfil their duty to hold the Cabinet to account by 'Calling In' the decision.

Any five Non-Executive Councillors can Call In a Cabinet decision within five days of the record of that decision being published. The decision is then effectively 'frozen' until the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or Full Council has considered it further.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee may then refer the decision back to the decision-maker (Cabinet, Portfolio Holder etc) for reconsideration in light of the Committee's recommendations. The relevant Cabinet Member and officer are required to attend the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to account for the decision that has been made.

Whilst the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has no decision-making powers (it can only recommend to Cabinet and/or Council), it is a powerful and influential forum to call the decision-makers of Hart to account. Overview and Scrutiny is about the Council working together with the community to improve services.