

West Yorkshire Combined Authority Access to Information Annex to the Procedure Standing Orders

Rights to attend meetings, inspect documents and record proceedings.

Modifications to Procedural Standing Orders are set out in an interim addendum to Standing Orders, to reflect Regulations issued under the Coronavirus Act 2020. The Regulations make provision for the conduct of local authority meetings held before 7 May 2021, by enabling meetings to be held remotely and removing the requirement for the annual meeting in 2020.

Part 1: Rights of the public

References to meetings of the Combined Authority include meetings of any committee or sub-committee appointed by the Combined Authority, including the Governance and Audit Committee.

These provisions do not affect any other rights to information arising under any standing orders of the Combined Authority, or by law.

1. Public access to meetings

Any meeting of the Combined Authority shall be open to the public except where the public is excluded (during the whole or part of the proceedings) in accordance with the following:

A Confidential information

The public **must** be excluded from meetings whenever it is likely in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings that confidential information would be disclosed.

Confidential information means:

- information given to the Combined Authority by a Government department on terms which forbid its public disclosure, or
- information the public disclosure of which is prohibited by or under an Act or Court Order.

B Exempt information

The Combined Authority **may** resolve to exclude the public from a meeting during an item whenever it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that exempt information would be disclosed to the public if the public were present during the item.

Exempt information means information falling within one of the following descriptions (as set out in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972):-

Description
Paragraph 1: Information relating to any individual .
Paragraph 2: Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual .
Paragraph 3: Information relating to the financial or business affairs¹ of any particular person (including the Combined Authority holding that information), except information which must be registered under various statutes, such as the Companies Acts or the Charities Act 2011. “Financial or business affairs” includes contemplated, as well as past or current, activities.
Paragraph 4: Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter² arising between the Combined Authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or officer-holders under the Combined Authority.
Paragraph 5: Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings .
Paragraph 6: Information which reveals that the Combined Authority proposes:- (a) to give under any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person, or (b) to make an order or direction under any enactment.
Paragraph 7: Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime .

Information falling within any of these descriptions is not exempt information if it relates to proposed development for which the local planning authority may grant itself planning permission under regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992.

Information falling within any of these descriptions may only be exempt if and so long as, in all the circumstances of the case, the **public interest** in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

A resolution to exclude the public from a meeting must:

¹ “Financial or business affairs” includes contemplated, as well as past or current, activities.

² “Labour relations matter” are as specified in paragraphs (a) to (g) of section 218(1) of the Trade Unions and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992, i.e. matters which may be the subject of a trade dispute within the meaning of that Act or any dispute about any such matter.

- identify the proceedings, or the part of the proceedings, to which it applies,
- state the description of the exempt information giving rise to the exclusion of the public, and
- confirm (by referring to reasons in a relevant report or otherwise) that in all the circumstances of the case, the **public interest** in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

C General Disturbance

Procedural Standing Order 24 provides for the public to be excluded from a meeting where general disturbance arises.

2. Public access to agenda and reports

The Head of Legal and Governance Services shall make the following open to public inspection, at the offices of the Combined Authority³, in accordance with the Combined Authority's Procedure Standing Orders:

- copies of the **agenda** for a meeting of the Combined Authority, and
- copies of any **report** for the meeting open to the public.

3. Public access to copies at the meeting

The Head of Legal and Governance Services will make available for the use of members of the public present at a meeting a reasonable number of copies of:

- the **agenda**, and
- those **reports** open to the public.

4. Public access to documents after a meeting

The Head of Legal and Governance Services will make available for inspection copies of the following for six years after a meeting:

- the **minutes** of the meeting (excluding any part of the minutes when the meeting was not open to the public or which disclose exempt or confidential information),
- a **written summary** of any proceedings not open to the public where the minutes open to inspection would not provide a reasonably fair and coherent record,
- the **agenda** for the meeting, and
- **reports** relating to items when the meeting was open to the public.

5. Public access to background papers

The author of any report will set out in the report a list of the background papers relating to the subject matter of the report which in the author's opinion:

³ These are available on request during usual office hours

- disclose any facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the report is based, and
- have been relied on to a material extent in preparing the report.

This requirement does not extend to:

- published works, or
- papers which disclose exempt or confidential information.

The Head of Legal and Governance Services will:

- publish a list of each of the **background documents** listed on the Combined Authority's website at the same time as the report is available for public inspection, and
- make a **copy** of each available to the public at the offices of the Combined Authority, on payment of a reasonable fee⁴.

The Head of Legal and Governance Services will make available for public inspection one copy of each of the documents on the list of background papers, for four years after the date of the meeting.

6. Reporting and recording meetings⁵

The Combined Authority will provide so far as practicable, reasonable facilities to any person attending a meeting for the purpose of reporting on the meeting.

A person attending a meeting for the purpose of reporting on it may use any communication method, including the internet, to publish, post or otherwise share the results of the person's reporting activities.

Publication and dissemination may take place at the time of the meeting or occur after the meeting.

Any person reporting on a meeting is expected to comply with the attached Code of Practice.

Meetings of the Combined Authority may be recorded and made available for public viewing on the intranet⁶. The Chair of a meeting may restrict the recording of meetings where an external participant in the meeting objects to being recorded and the Chair considers that the public interest in upholding their objection outweighs the

⁴ A copy is taken to be open where arrangements are made to produce it to members of the public as soon as is reasonably practicable after the request to inspect the copy.

⁵ See further Procedural Standing Order 23. Reporting in this context means:

- filming, photographing and making an audio recording of proceedings,
- using any other means for enabling people not present to see or hear proceedings at a meeting as it takes place or later, or
- reporting or providing commentary on proceedings at a meeting, orally or in writing so that the report or commentary is available as the meeting takes place or later to persons not present.

⁶ A copy of the Combined Authority's privacy notice relating to meetings can be found on the website [here](#).

public interest in allowing the recording to continue. The Chair will ask those reporting to respect the wishes of the external participant.

7. Public notice of proposed Key Decisions

A Definition of a Key Decision

A Key Decision means a decision of a decision maker⁷, which in the view of an overview and scrutiny committee of the Combined Authority is likely:

- (i) to result in the Combined Authority incurring **significant expenditure**, or the making of **significant savings**, having regard to the Combined Authority's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates; or
- (ii) to be **significant** in terms of its effects on persons living or working in an area comprising **two or more wards** or electoral divisions in the area of the Combined Authority.

For the purposes of (i) above, this includes any decision likely to result in the Combined Authority incurring expenditure or making savings (including the receipt or loss of income) of **£1 million or more in any financial year**⁸.

For the purposes of (ii) above, the definition of a Key Decision includes (but is not limited to) any decision:

- a) to approve or vary:
 - the Strategic Economic Plan,
 - the West Yorkshire Transport Strategy 2040,⁹ or
 - the Combined Authority's budget.
- b) to jointly¹⁰ approve, vary, revoke or postpone an **advanced quality partnership scheme**,
- c) to jointly¹¹ make, vary or revoke an **enhanced partnership plan**,
- d) to jointly¹² make, postpone or revoke an **enhanced partnership scheme**,

⁷ Including any decision taken by the Combined Authority or any decision-making committee or officer under authority delegated from the Combined Authority.

⁸ Where expenditure, saving or income of £1 million or more is likely to result from any decision in respect of a project or programme under the Combined Authority's Assurance Framework, the following should be treated as a Key Decision:

- any decision taken at decision point **2** of the Framework
- any decision taken at decision point **5** of the process, but only where more than 12 months has elapsed since decision point 2 **or** the scheme has substantively changed since that point
- any decision taken at any other decision point which is likely to result in an increase or decrease in agreed scheme costs of £1 million or more.

⁹ This is the Combined Authority's statutory Local Transport Plan.

¹⁰ that is, with at least one other local transport authority

¹¹ that is, with at least one other local transport authority

¹² that is, with at least one other local transport authority

- e) to jointly¹³ approve, vary or revoke an **advanced ticketing scheme**,
- f) to jointly¹⁴ make, vary or terminate a **voluntary partnership agreement**
- g) to set the **Transport Levy**,
- h) to consent to regulations relating to:
 - a **Sub-National Transport Body**,
 - a **levy** in relation to **functions other than transport**, or
 - **borrowing**, or
- i) to exercise a function relating to a **road user charging scheme**.

For the purposes of **(i)** and **(ii)** above, the following shall **not** be treated as a Key Decision:

- any decision which is a direct consequence of implementing a previous Key Decision,
- any decision which is the result of varying a previous Key Decision in line with recommendations made by an overview and scrutiny committee following a call-in of that decision,
- a Treasury Management decision in relation to the making, payment or borrowing of a loan,
- a decision by an officer under delegated authority to vary any document for updating or clarification purposes only, or
- the urgent settlement of proceedings to which the Combined Authority is a party.

B Notice provisions

Except where impracticable, a Key Decision cannot be made unless until a notice has been published which states:

- that a **Key Decision is to be made** in relation to the discharge of functions which are the Combined Authority's responsibility,
- the **matter** in respect of which the decision is to be made,
- the **decision maker's name and title** if any,
- the **date** on which, or the period within which, the decision is to be made,
- a **list of documents** submitted to the decision maker for consideration in relation to the matter in respect of which the key decision is to be made,
- the **address** from which, subject to any prohibition or restriction on their disclosure, copies of or extracts from, any document listed is available,
- **that other documents** relevant to those matters **may be submitted** to the decision maker, and
- the **procedure** for requesting details of those documents (if any) as they become available.

The Head of Legal and Governance Services will publish any such notice on the Combined Authority's web-site at least **28 clear days** before the Key Decision is made, and make it available for public inspection at the Combined Authority's offices.

Where in relation to any matter-

¹³ that is, with at least one other local transport authority

¹⁴ that is, with at least one other local transport authority

- the public may be excluded under section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 from the meeting at which the matter is to be discussed, or
- documents relating to the decision need not (because of confidential information¹⁵) be disclosed to the public,

the notice must contain particulars of the matter but may not contain any confidential information or exempt information.

C General Exception

Subject to cases of special urgency, where it is impracticable to publish a notice of a Key Decision at least 28 clear days before the Key Decision is to be made, the decision may only be made:

- where the Head of Legal and Governance Services has **informed the Chair of any relevant overview and scrutiny committee¹⁶ by notice** in writing of the matter about which the decision is to be made,
- where the Head of Legal and Governance Services has **published the notice** on the Combined Authority's web-site and **made the notice available for public inspection** at the Combined Authority's offices, and
- after **5 clear days** have elapsed following the day on which the Head of Legal and Governance Services made the copy of the notice available.

As soon as reasonably practicable after the Head of Legal and Governance Services has served a notice on the Chair, published the notice and made it available to the public, the Head of Legal and Governance Services must make available to the public and publish a **notice setting out the reasons why it was impracticable** to publish the notice of a Key Decision at least 28 days before the Key Decision was to be made.

D Cases of special urgency

Where the date by which a Key Decision must be made makes it impracticable to comply with the general exception provision above, the Key Decision may only be made where the decision maker¹⁷ has obtained **agreement from the Chair of any relevant overview and scrutiny committee¹⁸** that the making of the Key Decision is urgent and cannot reasonably be deferred.

As soon as reasonably practicable after the decision maker has obtained the necessary agreement that the Key Decision is urgent and cannot reasonably be

¹⁵ See Scrutiny Standing Order 13

¹⁶ Or if there is no such person, each member of the relevant overview and scrutiny committee,

¹⁷ Where the decision maker will be a committee or the Combined Authority itself, this will fall to the Managing Director or other relevant Director.

¹⁸ If there is no such person, or if the Chair is unable to act, agreement may be given by the Combined Authority's Chair, or where there is no Chair, the Vice Chair of the Combined Authority.

deferred, the decision maker must¹⁹ make available to the public at the Combined Authority's offices a **notice setting out the reasons why the Key Decision is urgent and cannot reasonably be deferred**; and publish that notice on the Combined Authority's web-site.

8. Public access to written records of decisions made by officers

A decision-making Officer may be required to produce a **written record** of their decision if the decision has been delegated:

- under a specific **express authorisation**, or
- under the **Officer Delegation Scheme** where the effect of the decision is to:
 - a) grant a **permission or licence**,
 - b) affect the **rights of an individual**, or
 - c) award a **contract or incur expenditure** which, in either case, **materially affects the Combined Authority's financial position**.

For the purposes of c) above, any award of a contract or expenditure of **£500,000 or over** will be deemed to materially affect the Combined Authority's financial position.

An Officer must also record and publish any **Key Decision** they make, whether or not it is outside the criteria set out above.

An Officer may also record and publish any other decision if they consider this to be in the public interest.

As soon as reasonably practicable after an officer has made a written record, the Head of Legal and Governance Services shall make any written record and any background papers available for inspection by the public:²⁰

- at all reasonable hours, at the offices of the Combined Authority,
- on the Combined Authority's website, and
- by such other means that the Combined Authority considers appropriate.

On request²¹ the Head of Legal and Governance Services will provide²²:

- a copy of the written record, and
- a copy of any background papers.

The Combined Authority will retain each written record and make it available for public inspection for 6 years beginning with the date on which the decision was made.

¹⁹ In consultation with the Head of Legal and Governance Services.

²⁰ The Combined Authority is not authorised to disclose confidential information (nor required to disclose exempt information) contained in these documents or any part of a document.

²¹ and on receipt of payment of postage, copying or other necessary charges.

²² Subject to footnote 20 above.

The Combined Authority will retain any background papers and make them available for public inspection for 4 years beginning with the date on which the decision was made.

Part 2: Press access to meetings

The Head of Legal and Governance Services shall supply on request²³ for any newspaper:

- a copy of the **agenda** and those **reports** open to the public,
- any **further statements** necessary to indicate the nature of the items on the agenda, and
- if the Head of Legal and Governance Services thinks fit, copies of **any other documents supplied to members** of the Combined Authority in connection with the item.

Procedural Standing Order 23 and rights relating to recording proceedings set out above apply to members of the press, in the same way as they apply to the public.

Part 3: Freedom of Information (FOI) and the Local Government Transparency Code

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR) apply to the Combined Authority, which therefore publishes information under a Publication Scheme²⁴. The Scheme specifies:

- the **classes of information** which the Combined Authority publishes or intends to publish,
- **how** information in each class is, or is intended to be, published, and
- whether the material is, or is intended to be, available to the public **free of charge** or on **payment**.

The public also has a general right of access to information held by the Combined Authority, but this is subject to exemptions²⁵.

A request for information must be submitted to and dealt with by the Head of Legal and Governance Services.

A request for information under the FOIA must:

- be in writing²⁶

²³ and on payment of postage or other necessary charges.

²⁴ This can be found under the Freedom of Information section of the Combined Authority website.

²⁵ The Monitoring Officer or in their absence the Head of Paid Service is authorised by the Secretary of State to assume the role of “qualified person” for the purposes of S36 FOIA (letter dated 4 May 2016).

²⁶ A request will be treated as made in writing where the text is transmitted by electronic means (e-mail), is received in legible form, and is capable of being used for subsequent reference.

- state the name of the applicant²⁷
- state an address for correspondence, and
- describe the information requested.

A request for information under the EIR must state a name and address for written correspondence, however the request can be made verbally or in writing.

The Combined Authority publishes information as required by the Local Government Transparency Code 2015, which includes but is not limited to the following:

- spending and expenditure including grants,
- procurement information including contracts,
- organisation chart detailing senior management personnel, and
- land and assets²⁸.

Part 4: Members' access

1. General

Any member of the Combined Authority is entitled to inspect any document which:

- is in the possession of or under the control of the Combined Authority, and
- contains material relating to any business to be transacted at a meeting of the Combined Authority

unless it appears to the Head of Legal and Governance Services that it discloses information falling within any of the descriptions of exempt information (set out in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as listed under section 1B above), **other than** the following (which will be open for inspection by members):

- a) Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person including the Combined Authority (except to the extent that the information relates to any terms proposed or to be proposed by or to the Combined Authority in the course of negotiations for a contract), or
- b) Information which reveals that the Combined Authority proposes:
 - to give under any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person, or
 - to make an order or direction under any enactment²⁹.

These rights are in addition to any other rights the member may have (such as those arising from a member's need to know at common law).

²⁷ Under the EIR a requester does not have to provide their real name.

²⁸ This can be found under the Freedom of Information section of the Combined Authority's website

²⁹ Section 100F(1) – (2B) Local Government Act 1972

The accounts of the Combined Authority shall be open to the inspection of any member and any such member may make a copy of or extract from the accounts³⁰.

2. Additional rights of access to documents for members of any overview and scrutiny committee or sub-committee

Subject to the exceptions outlined below, a member of an overview and scrutiny committee or sub-committee is entitled to a copy of any document which is in the possession or under the control of the Combined Authority and contains material relating to any business that has been transacted at a meeting of the Combined Authority or at a decision-making committee of the Combined Authority³¹. The member must make any request for such a document in writing to the Head of Legal and Governance Services, who shall consider any such request on behalf of the Combined Authority.

The document must be provided as soon as reasonably practicable and in any case no later than 10 clear days after the Head of Legal and Governance Services receives the request.

No member of an overview and scrutiny committee or sub-committee is entitled to a copy of any such document or part of a document as contains exempt³² or confidential information³³, unless that information is relevant to:

- an action or decision that the member is reviewing or scrutinising, or
- any review contained in any programme of work of the committee or sub-committee.

Where the Head of Legal and Governance Services determines that a member is not entitled to a copy of a document or part of any such document, they must provide the overview and scrutiny committee or sub-committee with a written statement setting out the reasons for that decision.

Part 5: List of Members

The Head of Legal and Governance Services will publish a list stating:

- the name and address of all current members of the Combined Authority and the constituent or non-constituent council they represent, and
- the name and address of all current members of the other Committees and any sub-committees.

A member of the public may inspect the list.

³⁰ Section 228(3) Local Government Act 1972

³¹ Article 10 of the Combined Authorities (Overview and Scrutiny Committees, Access to Information and Audit Committees) Order 2017

³² As defined in section 100I of the Local Government Act 1972.

³³ As defined in section 100A (3) of the Local Government Act 1972.