

Body: Scrutiny Committee 5 July 2010
Cabinet 14 July 2010

Subject: New executive arrangements

Report of: Local Democracy Manager

Purpose: To receive and consider the results of public consultation respect of the Council's executive arrangements, comment upon (by the Scrutiny Committee) and agree proposals (by the Cabinet) to be put before the full Council.

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Summary:

This report continues the process for the Council to adopt revised "executive arrangements" in line with recently introduced legal obligations. This process began with an introductory report to full Council on 24 February 2010.

There are 2 options to choose from. Either a Leader elected by the Council or a directly elected Mayor. Both would carry out all the Council's "executive functions" assisted by a number of councillors appointed by the Leader/Mayor to a Cabinet.

A 3-stage decision making process must be followed. This, the second stage, is about receiving the results of the public consultation and choosing one of the options.

The Scrutiny Committee are invited to make any comments they wish and Cabinet are asked to take account of all comments made and submit recommendations to the full Council.

The final stage will formally adopt the new executive arrangements (Council resolution to be passed no later than 31 December 2010). Changes will be effective immediately after the May 2011 Borough Council elections.

Decisions to be made by the Cabinet:

(1) To decide which of the 2 options to recommend to full council and if choosing the directly elected mayor model to say whether or not a referendum should first be held.

(2) To give reasons for the choice.

(3) To authorise the Local Democracy Manager in liaison with the Leader of the Cabinet to (a) draw up a document describing the Council's "proposals for change" as required under the legislation based on the chosen option and detailing the timetable for implementation and transitional arrangements; and (b) to publish notice of the proposals and make a copy of the document available for public inspection.

(4) To note that further reports will be made (a) to Council on 15 September 2010 following publication of the Council's proposals at which a formal adoption resolution will be moved; and (b) to a subsequent meeting of the Council to deal with changes to the Council's constitution and delegation arrangements.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Full details of this matter were given in the previous report to full Council on 24 February 2010 to which reference may be made. In brief, all local authorities are required to review their executive arrangements. The timescale depends on the type of local authority. As a "non-metropolitan district" the Borough Council is required to review its own arrangements by 31 December 2010. Any changes must be implemented 3 days after the date of the May 2011 local elections.

1.3 The Council will be required to adopt one of two executive arrangements:

- New style Leader and Cabinet executive (the "strong leader" model).
- Mayor and Cabinet executive (the directly elected mayor model).

2.0 The options available

2.1 The key features of the two new types of executive arrangements are:

Leader and Cabinet executive – a councillor is elected as Leader by the Council for a 4-year term following the elections (rather than annually as at present). The Council may retain the power to remove the Leader during their 4-year term by a vote of no confidence. The Leader not only appoints the Cabinet but also determines the size of the Cabinet (within the statutory minimum of 3 and maximum of 10, including the Leader). The Leader will decide how executive functions are to be discharged (i.e. what Cabinet portfolios will exist, and how they will be allocated, and delegations to officers). This is a change from the existing arrangements whereby full Council have the final say with regard to delegation arrangements. The executive arrangements must include provision for the appointment of a Deputy Leader with the power to act in the Leader's absence. The Deputy Leader is appointed (and may also be removed) by the Leader.

Mayor and Cabinet executive – a directly elected Mayor who appoints the

Cabinet. The Mayor decides how executive functions are to be discharged (i.e. what Cabinet portfolios will exist, and how they will be allocated, and delegations to officers). Unlike a Leader, the Mayor cannot be removed from office by the Council. The current “ceremonial” post of Mayor will have to be re-styled Chairman of the Council or similar. The directly elected Mayor may, however, carry out the ceremonial functions of a traditional Mayor, but he/she cannot chair meetings of the full Council.

- 2.2 Appendix 1 to the 24 February 2010 council report set out in greater detail the main differences between the current executive arrangements and the new executive options. Further background reading may be found in a House of Commons research paper and a paper published by Localis. Both were featured in the consultation papers and may be found via the links given in the background papers to this report (papers 3 and 4 respectively).
- 2.3 Although this cannot affect the decision making process in relation to this matter, the new coalition government have indicated their intention at some future time to introduce legislation that would allow councils to return to a committee type system of political management if they wished. It is not clear whether this would mean a return to the traditional committee system in place prior to the Local Government Act 2000 or to allow all councils the choice of the so called “fourth option” under the Act whereby councils with populations of less than 85,000 have been allowed to have a streamlined committee system instead of a cabinet so long as they also had one or more separate scrutiny and overview committees alongside their service delivery committees. The following statements are extracted from the coalition’s programme for government:
- *We will allow councils to return to the committee system, should they wish to.*
 - *We will create directly elected mayors in the 12 largest English cities, subject to confirmatory referendums and full scrutiny by elected councillors.*

The text of a recent e-mail from the Department for Communities and Local Government is set out in **appendix 3**.

3.0 Consultations undertaken

- 3.1 The Council agreed a 12 week consultation commencing Monday 15 March and closing on Monday 7 June. Information provided on the Council’s website (with a link from the front page titled “Have your say – how do you want Eastbourne Council to be run?” with an opportunity being given for comments to be made. The launch of the consultation was announced via a press release which resulted in articles in the Eastbourne Herald (newspaper and website) and the Argus.. The website information was available in printed leaflet form at Council reception points and on request (with large print, audio and interpretation options available if requested). A copy of the leaflet/website information is attached as **appendix 2**. The question asked of residents and other interested persons was if they believed the Council

should continue to operate with a Leader and Cabinet or move to a directly elected Mayor and Cabinet. Background information was provided explaining the differences between the 2 options.

4.0 Consultation outcome

- 4.1 Responses to the website consultation and other articles and comments in local media are set out in **appendix 1**. A total of 22 responses were received via the council's website. No written letters of representation were received.
- 4.2 The number of responses is relatively low and as such not statistically significant, however some interesting and indeed challenging comments have been made. A greater number of respondents have supported the directly mayor option and many of these have associated comments about the need to lessen the influence of party politics in local government and the opportunity of electing an independent mayor.

5.0 Drawing up proposals for change

- 5.1 The report to Council on 24 February 2010 detailed the legislative requirements for consultation, the drawing up proposals for change, timetable arrangements and transitional arrangements that might need to be put in place. In drawing up proposals, the council must consider "*the extent to which proposals, if implemented, would be likely to assist in securing continuous improvement in the way in which the local authority's functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness*". The proposals may include a provision for the change in governance arrangements to be subject to the approval of a referendum where this involves a move to the directly elected mayor model.
- 5.2 It is suggested that delegated authority is given to the Local Democracy Manager in liaison with the leader of the Council to draw up the proposals document once the Council have decided upon the option. In the case of a directly elected mayor option a referendum may first be called. The timetable will need to say when this will be held and also, if the referendum finds in favour of the option, when the election of the mayor will be held. In the case of the strong leader model being chosen, the timetable will provide for the new leader to take office on the day of the Annual Council meeting in 2011 (scheduled for 25 May). Transitional arrangements will apply in both cases to ensure that executive decision can continue in its current form between the date of the Council passing its formal adoption resolution (expected at the 15 September meeting) and the date on which they are due to be implemented (8 May 2011, i.e. 3 days after the day the elections are held in May; being the last day allowed by the legislation). In the case of a mayor being elected, the mayor will assume office and take charge on 8 May. In the case of a strong leader, as the election of leader will not take place until 25 May, the current leader will assume full executive responsibilities in the interim (and in the event of a change in political control a protocol will need to be put in place requiring liaison with other political group leader(s)

before any decisions are taken in the post-election period running up to the Annual Meeting).

6.0 Legal implications/risk assessment

6.1 These were detailed in the report to Council on 24 February 2010. At this stage it is worth reminding members of the comments previously made regarding the need to revise certain sections of the Council's constitution and in particular those sections relating to the exercise of delegated powers should the mayor or leader choose to give individual cabinet members decision making powers. This will be the subject of a future report to Council.

7.0 Policy and performance implications

7.1 These were detailed in the report to Council on 24 February 2010.

8.0 Financial and resourcing implications

8.1 These were detailed in the report to Council on 24 February 2010 and are also summarised in appendix 2 under the heading "Are there extra costs?".

David Robinson
Local Democracy Manager

Background papers:

1. Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007
http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2007/pdf/ukpga_20070028_en.pdf
2. Local Government Act 2000
http://www.opsi.gov.uk/Acts/acts2000/ukpga_20000022_en_1
3. House of Commons Library briefing note (SN/PC/05000 dated 30 July 2009)
<http://www.parliament.uk/commons/lib/research/briefings/snpc-05000.pdf>
4. A series of 3 essays discussing the pros and cons of the Directly Elected Mayors published by Localis (an independent think-tank).
<http://www.localis.org.uk/images/articles/localis%20mayors%20FINAL.pdf>
5. Report to Council on 24 February 2010
<http://www.eastbourne.gov.uk/council/meetings/council/?assetdet=84571&category=8219>

(dr/P:exec arrangements/cabinet 14 July 2010)

Details of comments received or otherwise reported in local media

A. The following responses were received via the Council’s website:

<i>Strong leader or directly elected mayor?</i>	<i>Respondent’s name and ward</i>	<i>Reasons for preferred option (if any given)</i>	<i>Referendum on the directly elected mayor option?</i>	<i>Additional comments (if any) as to how EBC should be run</i>
Mayor	T. Cooks (Langney)	1. A better, democratic process 2. By having an elected Mayor we can see very clearly the aims and objectives of each mayoral candidate and can be clear on what we get for our choice 3. An elected Mayor will provide the Town with someone who can be seen to be of competent leadership quality. This has to be a better method than letting the majority political party make its’ secret choice of who should represent them as Leader of the Council 4. In the 21st Century the time for ceremonial Mayors is past. In particular Eastbourne needs a true directly-elected champion to ensure that Eastbourne thrives. 5. It has already been seen elsewhere in the UK that directly elected Mayors work and have a galvanising effect on public services, development of the borough, and in encouraging new enterprise.	Yes	EBC has a long way to go before it can be seen to fully subscribe to open government. The Council-run theatres are a good example of how Town Hall obfuscates the true financial position of a set of performing art facilities that are in an appalling state and of questionable economic viability. Any directly elected mayoral candidate that promises a big increase in open government in the Town would get my vote
Leader	A. Wenham (Meads)	Better array of checks and balances with strong leader. People expect everything from a directly elected Mayor, but are invariably disappointed because insufficient authority and control over events is available at District Council level in a two-tier system.	No	

Leader	S. Parkin (Devonshire)	I feel that the current structure provides sufficient service to the local community and the existing structure allows for strong and decisive leadership of the Council. The Council has a strong vision and this provides for a strong corporate plan. The additional costs of a potential referendum and the potential additional costs for the administrative function of the elected mayor makes this a less attractive option in the current financial environment. With the future holding significant reductions in government grants it would seem wasteful to adopt a new structure that requires significant costs.	No	
Mayor	S. Sweiry (Sovereign)	Directly Elected Mayor reflects the people's choice. The person elected by the people from within the community. The position then become non-political. What Eastbourne need is a strong sense of a community spirit headed by a strong non-political leader - the people choice.	Yes	There is nothing wrong with the present system which has been working fine for years. However, time have changed and the system became more political. The voice of the people are lost after elections. A Strongly Directly Elected Mayor is the best idea to go forward in my opinion.
Mayor	E. Faulkner (Meads)	I believe that this gives direct accountability to local government and real change to the way local decisions are made. It will be a better system all round.	Yes	Eastbourne would benefit from a better model of government, in other areas of the country a mayor has made real difference to local economies and improvements to local services. It may even improve local peoples interest in local government!

Leader	Not given	<p>Directly elected mayor? Perhaps not such a good idea!</p> <p>Sounds good at first sight, but if it's that good an option why have only 11 councils out of the 380 English councils got one and why have so many referendums calling for an elected mayor been lost? Can't just be peoples' reluctance to embrace change. An elected mayor wouldn't have any more power or any stronger democratic mandate than a council leader. Perhaps the only real difference is the manner of election. If you think a direct election would provide a better choice of candidates then maybe this could be a good choice. Chances are it will be the same faces but with an election based around personalities rather than policies.</p> <p>At least a council leader can expect the support of a majority of councillors and thus hopefully smooth running of the council's affairs. An elected mayor could easily find him or herself without the necessary support. This has happened in a number of councils with dire consequences.</p> <p>We would also have to replace our civic mayor with a council chairperson. This would be a great shame as it would mean the loss of someone who can speak for the town in a non partisan way and can play an important role supporting the town's many voluntary and community groups and helping in their fund raising activities. An elected mayor might try and take over many of the civic duties of the current mayor becoming a full time politician and no doubt wanting allowances and expenses to match!</p>	No	
Mayor	T. Smith (Sovereign)		No	
Mayor	P. Phillips (Sovereign)	I like what I have read and seen of Directly Elected Mayors in other parts of the country. I like, especially, the fact that an independent has a real possibility of winning such an election. It really is time for the major parties to get an electoral smack on the nose - they do nothing for me or my family.	Yes	Let the council tax payers have their say.

Mayor	D. Butcher (Sovereign)	Lesser of two evils. Neither is sufficiently democratic. Either one negates the need for so many Councillors. They have no influence, they merely nod or shake as their leader decrees. Take party politics out of local government. Perhaps only have 2 per ward	No	
Mayor	D. Traynor (St Anthony's)	Its more democratic, direct decision making, but make it proportional representational, ideally STV	Yes	Big decisions should be decided on by referendum. Less power for the few, more for the many. It works in Switzerland
Leader	Not given	Of the two options the Strong Leader; has greater accountability to the Council. The logistics of supporting an executive Mayor would be an expensive administrative burden. The parameters within which the executive mayor has to operate - the constitutional and legislative framework - means that in effect their executive power is unlikely to realise any benefits. Significant risks of populist policies and self promotion are inherent with a directly elected Mayor	No	In partnership with Wealden, Rother & Lewes Districts
Leader	Not given		No	
Mayor	M. Steel (Sovereign)	Strongly believe the Mayor should be elected independently from political party dominated councillors having a 'Buggins Turn' to be Mayor.	Yes	Go back to having annual elections for one third of the members (with one year free of elections).
Mayor	C. Sweiry (Sovereign)		Yes	Elected Mayor is the people choice.
Mayor	M. Pratt (Sovereign)		Yes	
Mayor	J. Weeks (Sovereign)	An elected mayor would be Independent of local or central political party policy	Yes	The borough council should not be run on party political lines. All councillors should be elected as residents of Eastbourne to serve Eastbourne.

Mayor	I. Weeks (Sovereign)	Because the council has demonstrated that it is unable to show strong leadership and is incapable of managing the Borough's finances. Because the adversarial nature in which the members conduct the council's business stifles innovation and prevents progress. Being the leader of a political group is not a qualification for running a town.	Yes	The leader of the council should be elected by, and accountable to, the electorate, not a small politically motivated group. Eastbourne Borough Council operates on political dogma. Good ideas that come from the opposition are dismissed as a matter of course, even if they would benefit the town. There is a good possibility that a directly elected Mayor would be independent and would be able to form an administration free from party dogma
Mayor	P. Nevins (Sovereign)	More and direct accountability		
Mayor	C. Runalls (Sovereign)	Less party politics. It distracts from the issues effecting Eastbourne residents and competent governance. We've seen some really bad decisions from the council and a great deal of waste as a result. An elected mayor will be focussed on those who elected him or her and should be independent of the politics.	No	Let's stop wasting time and just get on with it!

Mayor	R. Runalls (Sovereign)	<p>My experience of EBC is that it is preoccupied with party politics. At Sovereign Harbour we undertook an open and informative campaign to give residents the opportunity to have a Parish Council for better local representation. We faced a concerted and sometimes personal attack from local councillors, obviously supported by Cllr. Tutt. This was in spite of the professed party policy of the Liberal Democrats to devolve power to local communities. This was clearly aimed at misleading residents without any thought of the lost opportunity or taking part in an open debate based on facts. As a consequence my impression of the moral values of the leading group on the Council is poor. In addition we have a Council that I feel is not just untrustworthy, but also of limited competence. The management of Airbourne, parking and finances in general have been questionable and it is little surprise that EBC is rated as the worst council in the Southeast. As a resident of Eastbourne I frankly feel ashamed of my Council.</p> <p>Under the current arrangement our mayor appears principally to be a figurehead, who attends functions, but has no impact on standards. I feel that an elected mayor who can standback and exercise authority to get a grip of this mess. I know there is a risk - there are some fine elected mayors, who have had a positive impact and some who haven't. However, I think we should give it a try and elect a mayor.</p>	No	
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The following were received shortly after the consultation closing date (and the last one after publication of the Scrutiny Committee version of this report):

Leader	T. Liddiard (Upperton)		Yes	
Mayor	Not given		Yes	

Continued over...

Leader	P. Newton (Upperton)	I believe that the public can exercise its democratic rights by electing councillors and that having been democratically elected councillors are in the best position to assess which of them should become leader.	No	
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B. The following articles and letters were noted in local media:

Eastbourne Herald 22 February 2010 – Opinion column (by Ian Lucas) in advance of Council report. Article supported principle of elected mayor but gave reservations as to its effectiveness given current 2-tier system of local government in East Sussex with both county and borough councils. Believed mayor wouldn't have power to get things done.

Eastbourne Herald 19 March 2010 – Article following EBC press release.

Eastbourne Herald website 19 March 2010 – Article following EBC press release.

Argus 23 March 2010 – Article following EBC press release.

Eastbourne Herald website 23 March 2010 – Response to article. *"Far better I would have thought to dump the whole lot, councillors and mayors included, and run everything from County Government Offices on a non political party basis. Thus saving a fortune on councillors and their expenses and actually getting things done without the constant bickering between the self interested nonentities that we have to put up with at present. Local democracy? Forget it. It doesn't exist."* ("roneoron", Hailsham)

Eastbourne Herald website 23 March 2010 – Response to article.

"Seems like a lot of fuss about nothing. Will we never learn? All changes to local government always cost too much and what do they deliver? Let's get on with the system we have." (leffe999)

Letter Eastbourne Herald 25 March 2010 – *"We feel most strongly that the people of Eastbourne should be able to vote for individuals to become an elected mayor of Eastbourne. We do not agree with the current system which enables the Council to choose the mayor of the town."* (H. and P. Smith, Meads)

How do you want Eastbourne Council to be run?

Consultation on new executive arrangements

Consultation closes Monday 7 June 2010

If you would wish to receive this consultation document in an alternative format, such as large print, please let us know by contacting Local Democracy by either:

- e-mail local.democracy@eastbourne.gov.uk
- telephone on (01323)41502.

Eastbourne Borough Council is reviewing its existing executive arrangements following legislation passed by the Government. The legislation requires the Council to change its executive decision making process to one of two leadership options, namely Strong Leader or Elected Mayor. The Council would like to find out your views on the two options. At the end of this consultation document are 3 questions.

This note is intended to give you background information. More detailed information can be found in the following documents:

- A copy of the report recently submitted to Council members. [Council report](#)
- A House of Commons briefing note on the subject of Directly Elected Mayors. [House of Commons paper](#)
- A series of 3 essays discussing the pros and cons of the Directly Elected Mayors published by Localis (an independent think-tank). [Localis essays](#)

(Copies of all 3 documents listed above can be viewed at the Main Reception area at the Town Hall, Grove Road, Eastbourne).

Background to the review

Under the existing leadership arrangements, Eastbourne Borough Council has a Cabinet of six Councillors which is chaired by the Leader of the

Council. Members of the Cabinet are appointed by the Leader at the start of each Council year beginning in May.

The Cabinet is formed by the majority party and has a wide range of executive responsibilities, including the power to determine all proposals, within existing policy, which require member approval, and carry out all functions that are not otherwise reserved to the Council, its Committees or delegated to Officers.

New legislation has been introduced by the Government which requires any Council which currently operates executive arrangements to adopt one of two options. The Council is seeking, through this consultation, the views of local residents/electors and political parties, stakeholders, special interest and community groups in order to inform a decision on which of the two options to adopt. That decision will be made by a Special Meeting of the Full Council to be held later this year.

The options

Under the new legislation, the Council can opt for one of two models:

- **Strong Leader and Executive Cabinet** – comprises a Councillor elected as Leader by the Council for a four year term, and two or more Councillors appointed to the Cabinet by the Leader.
- **Directly Elected Mayor and Cabinet** – comprises a directly elected Mayor who appoints two or more Councillors to the Cabinet.

In each case, the Leader/Mayor would hold responsibility for all executive functions. He/she would appoint Councillors to a Cabinet and delegate decision making powers to individual Councillors and Officers. The Council as a whole would continue to approve the annual budget, key Council policies and set council tax levels.

The key difference is how they are appointed and removed from office. The directly elected Mayor is not a Councillor, but is chosen in a separate election and cannot be removed by the Council. The Strong Leader would be an elected Councillor, elected as Leader by the Council. The Council would also retain powers to remove the Strong Leader from office.

The arrangements for decision making in relation to regulatory and governance functions (e.g. licensing, planning, electoral matters, staff appointments) are not the responsibility of the Cabinet and will remain unchanged.

What happens to the civic Mayor?

Under the Strong Leader model there would be no change to the position and role of the Mayor. A Civic Mayor would still be elected from among the members of the Council each year at the annual meeting.

If an Executive Mayor was directly elected, the responsibilities of a Civic Mayor would be undertaken by a Council Chairman.

Should a referendum be held?

If the Council was minded to adopt the Directly Elected Mayor model it could choose to hold a referendum. All local electors would then have a chance of saying if they wanted this model or not.

The Council is only obliged to hold such a referendum if a petition signed by over 5% of the Borough's electors is received.

If a referendum is held the Council must abide by the voters' decision (even if there is a low turn-out).

The Council cannot hold a referendum if it is minded to adopt the Strong Leader model as there is no legal basis for holding such a poll.

Are there extra costs?

The Strong Leader model would cost no more than the current arrangements.

There would be extra costs if there was a Directly Elected Mayor:

- If the Council decides that a referendum should be held then it is likely that the costs of holding the poll will run to about £100,000. The poll would have to be run in the same way that local or parliamentary elections are conducted with poll cards being issued, polling stations set up and electors allowed to vote by post if they have chosen this method of voting.
- Every 4 years an election would be held for the Mayor. Although this would be held at the same time as the election of Councillors, there would be some additional costs specific to the Mayoral election. These would be between £20,000 and £35,000 depending on the extent to

which the Council agreed the fund the leaflet which has to be sent to all electors giving details of Mayoral candidates.

- In the longer run there may be potential for an increase in administrative costs of support and advice to an independently mandated Mayor.

Timetable

The Council must opt for one of the above models by December 2010, for implementation after the elections in May 2011. We are seeking feedback from residents and interested parties on the model you would prefer to see.

Consultation questions

Please use the online Local Democracy Contact Form to send us your comments, by Monday 7 June 2010 at the latest.

(Alternatively write to Local Democracy (Executive Consultation), Town Hall, Grove Road, Eastbourne, BN21 1SY or e-mail local.democracy@eastbourne.gov.uk with the words "Executive Consultation" in the enquiry subject line).

Please answer the following 3 questions. You may also add other comments if you wish.

1. Which of the 2 models do you favour: Strong Leader or Directly Elected Mayor?

2. If you can, please give one or more reasons for your choice of model.

3. Do you believe that the Council should first hold a referendum if minded to adopt the Directly Elected Mayor option?

If you have any questions relating to this consultation please contact David Robinson, Local Democracy Manager on (01323) 415022 or e-mail david.robinson@eastbourne.gov.uk

E-mail from DCLG dated 16 June 2010

We are aware that under Schedule 4 to the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 ("the 2007 Act") non-metropolitan district councils operating the old-style leader and cabinet model must pass a resolution by 31 December 2010 to move to either the directly elected mayor and cabinet or new-style leader and cabinet model.

The Government is concerned about the overly prescriptive way in which local authorities currently work. As part of the localism agenda, it is therefore committed to allow local authorities to return to the committee system rather than the existing executive models, should they wish to.

This would require legislation. The Government is currently considering how this could be best implemented, including how its proposal interacts with existing legislation and the current statutory requirements placed on local authorities. In particular, those set out in the Local Government Act 2000 and the 2007 Act.

The Government understands that its proposals may lead to a period of uncertainty and may cause practical difficulties, in the short term, for those local authorities required to change governance arrangements under the 2007 Act. However, until such time as any legislation is put in place to give effect to the Government's proposals, local authorities remain under a statutory duty to act in accordance with the provisions of the 2007 Act.

Kind regards

Karl Holden
Senior Policy Adviser
Local Governance Division
Department for Communities and Local Government