



**Policy Title: Decision Making**

**Date: February 2025**



## Version Control

Version Number	Date	Revisions	By
1	February 2022	Original Draft	Healthwatch Milton Keynes CIO Task and Finish Group
0.1	March 2023	Reviewed.	Maxine Taffetani
0.2	February 2025	Full review.	Maxine Taffetani

## Policy Statement

Healthwatch MK CIO makes decisions about the delivery of the Healthwatch Milton Keynes activities in an open and transparent way, in consultation with beneficiaries of publicly funded health and social care services in Milton Keynes. This ensures the interests of the people of Milton Keynes are always put first. This policy and associated procedures outline the steps taken to ensure our strategic decisions are evidence-based, inclusive, involve residents in decision-making and lead to substantive impact in the community.

The regulations and governing principles by which the Healthwatch MK CIO operates are:

- The NHS Bodies and Local Authorities (Partnership Arrangements, Care Trusts, Public Health, and Local Healthwatch) Regulations 2012 – [The NHS Bodies and Local Authorities \(Partnership Arrangements, Care Trusts, Public Health and Local Healthwatch\) Regulations 2012](#) referred to as *\*Regulation 40 throughout this document*
- The Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Seven Principles of Public Life (Nolan Principles): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-7-principles-of-public-life>

## Legal Framework

The Health and Social Care Act 2012 introduced Healthwatch from 1st April 2013. Each of the 153 upper tier local authority areas in England has its own local Healthwatch organisation. Funding for local Healthwatch was devolved from the Department of Health to each local authority who were then responsible for commissioning a provider to develop an independent Healthwatch organisation

in their area. Healthwatch MK CIO delivers the Healthwatch Milton Keynes service under grant agreement with Milton Keynes City Council (MKCC).

As holder of the grant from MKCC for the delivery of Healthwatch Milton Keynes and in accordance with the Charities Act 2011, Healthwatch MK CIO's Board of Trustees hold accountability for ensuring Healthwatch Milton Keynes is meeting its statutory requirements during the grant period. The Board of Trustees provides strategic leadership and holds accountability for all contractual, legal and financial duties of Healthwatch MK CIO.

Overseeing the day-to-day operations of Healthwatch Milton Keynes is the responsibility of Healthwatch MK CIO's Chief Executive Officer.

## Relevant decisions

Regulation 40 requires of the NHS Bodies and Local Authorities (Partnership Arrangements, Care Trusts, Public Health, and Local Healthwatch) Regulations 2012 – [The NHS Bodies and Local Authorities \(Partnership Arrangements, Care Trusts, Public Health and Local Healthwatch\) Regulations 2012](#) state that each local Healthwatch must have a procedure for making relevant decisions, specifically to include:

- Provisions as to who may make relevant decisions
- Provisions for involving lay persons or volunteers in such decisions
- Provisions for dealing with breaches of any procedure referred to the two previous points, which should include circumstances in which a breach would be referred to the relevant local authority

Relevant decisions to be taken by Healthwatch MK CIO's Board of Trustees include:

- When to escalate issues to Healthwatch England and/ or the Care Quality Commission and other regulators
- Which health and social care services Healthwatch Milton Keynes is looking at covering with its activities
- Whether to request information from commissioners and providers
- Whether to make a report or recommendation to a service provider
- Which premises to Enter and View and when those premises are to be visited
- Whether to refer a matter to an overview and scrutiny committee

- Whether to report a matter concerning HWS's activities to another person
- Any decisions about sub-contracting/ commissioned work

Relevant decisions do not include

- Operational delivery.
- Operational decisions.
- Managing or directing staff.
- Performance management of staff.
- day-to-day activity that may be required to carry out exploratory work prior to making a relevant decision.

## Decision making procedure

Relevant decisions will be made by the Board of Trustees within meetings in public, paying due regard to intelligence and public voice gathered through, or during:

- Board meetings in public
- Project activities/workstreams
- Outreach and engagement activities which includes focus groups, consultations and surveys.

Where a meeting is deemed to be in public, this means the contributions that will have been made are made in the public domain whether or not any members of the public are actually present. While the meeting overall may be in public, there may still be a need to maintain confidentiality on some information, for example if talking about an individual's personal data, which may not be appropriate to discuss "in public".

All relevant decisions, including those delegated to the Chief Executive Officer, will be recorded in the minutes of Board meetings, at which the decision was made. The minutes of all Board meetings will be published on the Healthwatch Milton Keynes website once approved by Trustees as being a correct record of the meeting concerned.

Most relevant decisions will be made at Healthwatch MK CIO meetings in public. When it is necessary to make a decision at other times, they will be ratified at the subsequent Board of Trustees meeting in public. If an urgent decision needs to be taken and the Board of Trustees cannot be urgently contacted, then the Chair of

the Board will make a decision to approve, or not. As soon as possible, thereafter the Board of Trustees will be informed of the Chair's decision, and it will be recorded in the minutes of the next Board meeting in public.

All relevant decision will be based on a thorough understanding of the following:

- Whether the decision is related to the role of Healthwatch Milton Keynes
- What the problem or potential problem the decision will address
- What evidence there is to justify the decision
- What the decision needs to accomplish – impact
- What risks are there in making the decision

The Board has the authority to delegate some decisions to the Chief Executive Officer. Decision-making and delegation of decisions are set out within the organisation's **Schedule of Delegation**.

Once a decision has been made, the Chief Executive Officer is responsible for implementation and delivery, within an agreed reporting process to Board.

The Board of Healthwatch Milton Keynes will reconsider a decision where new data or information has become available, or if circumstances change, which might prompt it to reach a different decision, or where there is evidence that this decision-making process was not followed.

## Annual Business Planning

The scope of the work of Healthwatch Milton Keynes is significant – it has a responsibility for monitoring the service quality within health and social care services for all adults, children, and young people in Milton Keynes, including those who are most vulnerable. This means we must prioritise the issues we focus on. The main sources to inform our business plans are likely to come from:

- People's experiences of health and social care services that they share with us.
- Evidence we proactively collect about specific areas of concern through the stories and enquiries we hear directly, including deliberative research, outreach and surveys.
- National and local data sets that evidence issues affecting large numbers of the local population and the most excluded.

This list is not exhaustive and other relevant sources of data and insight will be considered.

Most of the decisions approved by the Board of Trustees will be applicable to the work of Healthwatch Milton Keynes and will be discussed/made as part of the annual business planning cycle. This work will include gathering evidence, researching, priority setting, developing theories of change and agreeing how we will be monitoring progress and report outcomes.

## **Involving lay persons or volunteers in such decisions**

Healthwatch Milton Keynes involves members of the public to identify which health and social care issues, and service are most important and concerning to them to make decisions on project activities. We do this in three key ways:

- Encouraging members of the public to share their experiences and concerns throughout the year via webform, email, WhatsApp and telephone line
- Asking residents to complete an annual survey on what our priority areas should be
- Working with our Resident and Lived Experience Forum to select our priorities and present to the Board of Trustees for approval

To determine our priorities and make decisions about special projects, Healthwatch Milton Keynes Resident and Lived Experience Forum will assess each project against the following criteria:

- How much evidence is available about the issue?
- How many people will be positively impacted?
- What is the impact on people on community groups who experience health inequalities and who feel their voice is seldom heard?
- Would Healthwatch Milton Keynes be able to achieve a positive influence on health and/or social care services?
- Does the issue align with health and social care strategies and need assessments?
- Is the issues already being worked on by someone else.

To submit projects for annual business plans or special projects, staff and volunteers can complete this [Project priority tool](#)

Healthwatch Milton Keynes' Board will carefully consider the recommendations of the Resident and Lived Experience Forum and approve activities where it can add most value. Areas to be considered include but are not limited to:

- That the issues fit with our organisational role and responsibilities, ensuring Healthwatch Milton Keynes delivers to its statutory remit.
- How much the issue matters to local people, it must be something they care about as we are here to be the voice of people in health and social care.
- How much change, improvement and positive impact Healthwatch Milton Keynes can bring about. This enables us to make sure we are choosing areas where we can have the greatest impact. This is important to deliver the greatest return for our budget, maintain our independence and ensure we bring issues to the attention of the health and care system.
- Does the change or improvement need to come from Healthwatch Milton Keynes – so we aren't focusing on things that others can do more easily and effectively?

## **Breaches of Procedure for making relevant decisions**

There may be times when an extraordinary and/ or urgent event necessitates that this procedure is knowingly breached because there is neither time to seek wider involvement in the decision, or the matter is too sensitive to do so. In this case the following action will be taken:

- As soon as a possible breach is identified, they must report it to the CEO who will notify the Chair of the Board of Trustees
- The CEO will prepare a written report for the Board of Trustees explaining:
  - If a breach of the decision-making process has occurred
  - The nature of any confirmed breach(es) and what decision(s) were affected
  - Remedial action to prevent a recurrence in the circumstances where a breach has occurred

If the breach of the agreed procedure is considered to have also breached the grant agreement between Healthwatch Milton Keynes and Milton Keynes Local Authority, it will be reported to the Local Authority and further action agreed between the Local Authority and Healthwatch Milton Keynes.

In each eventuality, actions will be minuted and published on Healthwatch Milton Keynes' website.

## Equality, Diversity and Inclusion statement

Healthwatch Milton Keynes is committed to ensuring all decisions made are free from any form of discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

Equality Impact Assessments will be completed for all activities we undertake.

Healthwatch Milton Keynes will monitor this policy in order to identify whether it is having an adverse impact on any group of individuals and act accordingly.

## Procedures

Healthwatch Milton Keynes undertakes to carry out the following procedures:

- Publish Healthwatch Milton Keynes' active version of the Decision-Making policy document on Healthwatch Milton Keynes' website.
- Review and obtain Board approval to Healthwatch Milton Keynes' decision-making policy every two years.
- Awareness and understanding of policies and procedures, including this decision making, will be part of our staff and, as good practice dictates, volunteers induction process.
- Ensure all Healthwatch Milton Keynes staff and where applicable, volunteers, are familiar with the policy and refresh their understanding and awareness of the need for open and transparent decision making by reading the policy on a regular basis, at a minimum after review by the Board.
- Publish minutes from Board meetings where relevant decisions are made in a timely manner on Healthwatch Milton Keynes' website. Where decisions are made outside of board meetings, they will be ratified at the subsequent Board meeting.

## Reviews of this policy

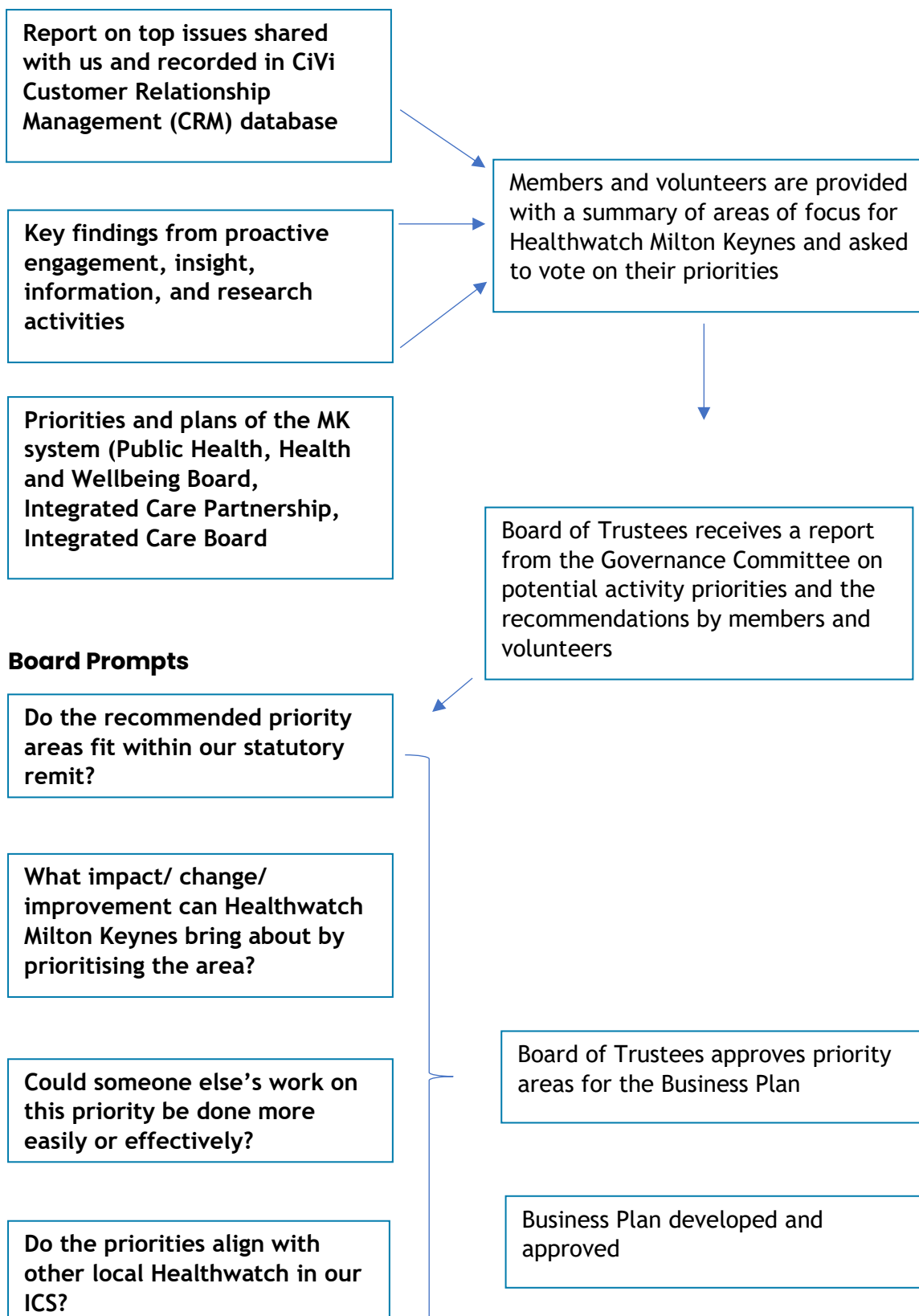
The Board of Healthwatch Milton Keynes will review the effectiveness of the decision-making policy and procedures set out in this document every two years.



Any amendments to this policy and the procedures governing the making of relevant decisions will require a simple majority of board members voting in favour.

The amended policy document will be published on the website of Healthwatch Milton Keynes as soon as is practicable.

## Annual Business Planning – Decision Making Flowchart

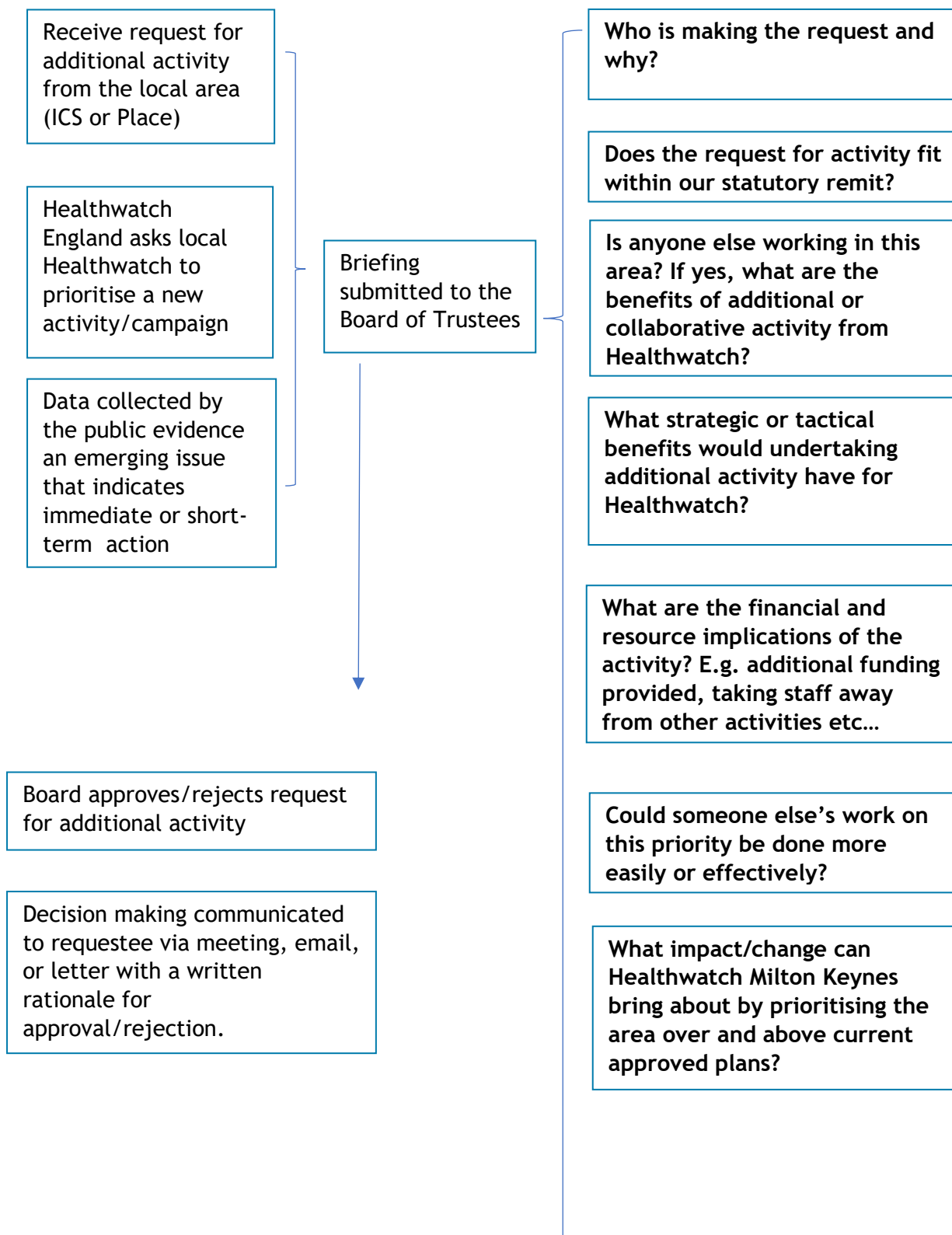


**As a full set of priorities together, are they effective? Would prioritising other areas together provide opportunities for greater impact overall?**

**Decision making communicated to members and the public through:**

- Published Board meeting minutes
- Member Communications
- Published Business Plan Summary

## Priorities and requests for activity outside of Business Plan – Decision Making Framework



Board decision communicated to volunteers, members and the public through:

- Published Board meeting minutes
- Member Communications

**What strategic or operational risks arise from the additional activity e.g., risk of poor quality of outcomes if staff stretched too thin**

**Have we sought the views of volunteers, members, or the public on the request?**