

Civil Service Decision-Making Protocol: Executive Summary

Purpose

This protocol ensures that civil servants exercise delegated authority responsibly, efficiently, and transparently, with clear boundaries between administrative and political decision-making. No action that is novel, contentious, or repercussive may proceed without explicit political consent.

Key Principles

- **Delegated Authority:** Applies only to routine, non-contentious matters within existing policy, legal, and budgetary frameworks.
- **Limits:** Delegated decisions must not create precedents, new policy approaches, or expand government without political approval.
- **Essentiality:** Any new service or resource must be clearly demonstrated as essential-not merely desirable or based on practices from other jurisdictions.

Red Lines for Escalation

Civil servants must escalate any matter that:

- Is novel, contentious, or has significant consequences.
- Recommends higher costs or resource use when a cheaper alternative exists.
- Involves expansion of government services or staff.
- Proposes new services/resources that are not clearly essential.
- Would restrict public freedoms, stifle economic activity, or limit lawful public activities without express political consent.
- Contravenes existing policy or legal requirements.
- Is unreasonable, disproportionate, or beyond legal authority (*ultra vires*).

Decision-Making Process

- **Routine Decisions:** Permitted if within delegated authority, documented, and justified.
- **Escalation:** Required if any red line is crossed; no action taken until political consent is obtained.
- **Documentation:** All decisions must be recorded, including rationale, authority, and alternatives considered.

Efficiency and Value for Money

- Prioritize speed and value for money in all decisions.
- Outsource to the private sector where it offers better value.
- Avoid in-house solutions if a suitable private sector option exists.

Accountability and Reasonableness

- Civil servants are personally responsible for their decisions.
- Actions must be reasonable, proportionate, and evidence-based.
- Performance must be measurable and regularly reviewed.

Legal and Ethical Compliance

- All actions must comply with legal and ethical standards.
- Transparency and openness to audit are required.

Disciplinary Provisions

- Breaches of this protocol may result in proportionate disciplinary action, focused on accountability and continuous improvement.

Summary Table

Decision Type	Delegated	Escalate
Routine, non-contentious	Yes	No
Novel/contentious/repercussive	No	Yes
Higher cost/resource	No	Yes
Private sector solution exists	No	Yes
Service/resource expansion	No	Yes
New service/resource (essential only)	No*	Yes
Policy change/new precedent	No	Yes
Restricts freedoms/economy/lawful acts	No	Yes
Unreasonable/disproportionate/ultra vires	No	Yes

*Only if clearly demonstrated as essential and justified.

Conclusion

Civil servants must act within delegated limits, ensure decisions are justified, reasonable, and essential, and escalate significant or impactful matters for political decision. This protocol safeguards efficient, accountable, and transparent public administration.

For full details and guidance, refer to the complete protocol document or the relevant civil service code and best practice links.