



Decision Maker's Handbook





What is this handbook for?



This handbook supports Senior Responsible Owners (SROs) and Portfolio Executives who are new to project governance under the **Corporation's P3 Policy Framework**.

Please note: The new framework is being rolled out. To ensure a smooth transition to the updated templates, tools, and submission processes, some documents will only be available for submission from spring 2026.



What does it show?

- What to look for at each Gateway
- Key questions to ask before approval
- Who is accountable for what
- What documents are submitted to help you make decisions

Key terms:

What is a Senior Responsible Owner (SRO)?

The SRO holds overall accountability for ensuring that each project or programme within the portfolio meets its agreed objectives, delivers its intended outcomes and benefits, and represents value for money. The SRO also owns the business case.

What is a Portfolio Executive?

The Portfolio Executive is accountable for the governance and strategic oversight of a portfolio of projects and programmes. The role ensures that the portfolio remains strategically aligned, within corporate strategy and funding parameters, and delivers overall value.



Gateway 1 – Strategic Alignment (Direct Stage)

Decision Objective:

Authorise that there is a compelling need for the project or programme, identify any budget constraints and the required outcomes.



At Gateway 1, the SRO:

- ✓ Confirms that the project has a compelling strategic need and delivers priority outcomes for residents and business.
- ✓ Endorses that the options to be investigated at the next stage are the right ones

At Gateway 1, the Portfolio Executive:

- ✓ Ensures that the project advances Member, Corporation and Departmental Portfolio priorities and that resources should be assigned to it
- ✓ Approves feasibility costs and any constraints (e.g. particularly funding or budget caps).
- ✓ Stops non-viable projects immediately

Key Questions Decision Makers should be asking at Gateway 1?

- Does the programme or project meet its' portfolio's outcomes and objectives?
- Have critical stakeholders been identified? How will the public react?
- Do we wish to progress this project to the Options Appraisal stage, and what level of appraisal would we expect to see?

Key Documents to review:

From Nov 2025

- Completed tiering assessment
- Governance Decisions Register
- Business case summary with emphasis on strategic dimension, contains strategic alignment of benefits
- Procurement approval timeline (if known)
- Risk Register (from Cora)

Available later in 2026

- Project Coversheet (generated with PowerBI)
- First iteration of Full business case with emphasis on strategic dimension.



Gateway 2 – Strategic Options Appraisal (Define Stage)

Decision Objective:

Confirm viable options have been evaluated and authorise preferred option for delivery and move to stage 3



At Gateway 2 the SRO:

- ✓ Approves that the preferred option is the best value for money, given its risk, for the square mile and beyond
- ✓ Ensures that the preferred option has a positive return on investment and benefit profile

At Gateway 2, the Portfolio Executive:

- ✓ Confirms that the preferred option represents value for money relative to other projects in the portfolio which are also competing for resources
- ✓ Balances ambition with affordability (capital and revenue) within the portfolio of projects and programmes

Key Questions Decision Makers should be asking at Gateway 2?

- Have credible alternatives been assessed?
- Which option maximises social value and financial return, given the risk?
- Have the cost and benefit assumptions underpinning the business case been challenge?

Key Documents to review:

From Nov 2025	Available later in 2026
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Governance Decisions Register• Business case summary including options appraisal with cost estimates, assumptions, and benefits• Procurement Approval Timeline (if available)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Second iteration of Full business case including options appraisal, cost estimates, assumptions and benefits• Climate Impact Assessment (if required)

Gateway 2b: At stage 2b, projects use an optional additional gateway when more detailed scoping is required before design begins.



Gateway 3 – Authority to start work (Design Stage)

Decision Objective:

Confirm that the Full Business Case, funding and delivery plan are complete and affordable, and to authorise the start of work by approving resources, governance and assurance readiness for delivery.



At Gateway 3 the SRO:

- ✓ Signs off the final business case
- ✓ Takes accountability for the delivery plan, milestones and risk management for the project or programme
- ✓ Ensures that governance and assurance structures are appropriate for the project and programme

At Gateway 3, the Portfolio Executive:

- ✓ Endorses the final investment decision – holds executive authority to approve or terminate Tier 4 projects and programmes
- ✓ Acts as the executive advocate for the project or programme to strategic stakeholders, including CoL Portfolio Board

Key Questions Decision Makers should be asking at Gateway 3?

- Do I have confidence in the business case to approve the investment?
- Is the risk provision appropriate and complete for a project of this type?
- Has a budget been secured to deliver the programme?
- Have stakeholders and the public been adequately engaged?

Key Documents to review:

From Nov 2025	Available later in 2026
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Business case summary with all 5 cases completed• Project Initiation Document (PID) including resource schedule• Project Schedule (updated continuously in Cora)• RAID Logs (updated continuously in Cora)• Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Final iteration of Full business case• Outcomes Delivery Plan (Benefits Register)• Benefits Dashboard

Top tip: Between gateway 3 and 4 (during project delivery), responsibility for operational delivery and oversight defaults to the SRO.



Gateway 4 – Readiness for Operation (Deliver Stage)

Decision Objective:

To confirm that deliverables are complete and operationally ready, and to approve transition to operational environment or handover to the client. They also need to confirm the go/no go decision.



At Gateway 4 the SRO:

- ✓ Undertakes the 'go/no-go' decision - approves that the operation is ready to receive the project
- ✓ Ensures that residual remedy plan has been generated to their satisfaction and that any remaining risks of transition are known and owned
- ✓ Champions the delivery of outcomes by the client at the next stage of work

At Gateway 4, the Portfolio Executive:

- ✓ Is the executive champion for realising the outcomes determined for the project

Key Questions Decision Makers should be asking at Gateway 4?

- Is the operation ready to accept the programme outcomes and deliverables?
- Have all deliverables been quality-assured?
- Have all critical risks and issues been resolved?
- Are the original outcomes still going to be achieved?

Key Documents to review:

From Nov 2025

- Project/ Programme Status Reports (generated through Cora)
- RAID logs (updated continuously in Cora)
- Operational readiness review

Available later in 2026

- Benefits Dashboard



Gateway 5 – Outcome Review (Outcome Review)

Decision Objective:

Approve formal closure, achievement of outcomes, and benefits realisation handover.



At Gateway 5 the SRO:

- ✓ Confirms that the expected benefits, outcomes and value for money have been achieved against the business case
- ✓ Approves final costs and ensures resolution of remaining commercial issues

At Gateway 5, the Portfolio Executive:

- ✓ Provides strategic direction for the wider portfolio based on the lessons learned from this project or programme
- ✓ Approves closure for Tier 4 projects and endorses the closure for other Project tiers

Key Questions Decision Makers should be asking at Gateway 5?

- Did the project or programme deliver the outcomes expected, and what evidence do we have?
- What lessons did we learn from this programme?
- Is the project or programme ready to be formally closed?

Key Documents to review:

From Nov 2025

- Programme/Project Closure Report (including Outcome Report)
- Lessons Learned Report (from Cora)

Available later in 2026

- Benefits Dashboard



Good practice and next steps...

At every gateway:

Portfolio Exec must ensure:

- Strategic alignment and affordability
- Non-viable projects are closed & viable projects are championed
- Executive authority is exercised for Tier 4

SRO must ensure::

- Business case is evidence based have positive return and progress corporation priorities
- The true and full risk profile is captured
- Compliance with P3 framework and Corporation's governance

General Good practice:

- ✓ Keep the focus on strategic outcomes and benefits, not just delivery activity.
- ✓ Approach each Gateway as an opportunity to test whether the project remains viable and aligned to strategy.
- ✓ Ensure that you are satisfied that the projects has considered and planned for engagement including member engagement where required.
- ✓ Review lessons from other projects to embed learning.
- ✓ Consider whether multiple related projects would deliver greater value as a single programme.
- ✓ Support and challenge project teams using Cora as the source of project truth .

Training for SROs and Portfolio Executives:

Training is currently being developed as part of the P3 Development Hub launching in early 2026.

Live training is hosted on the project management pages of the City of London intranet.



If you have any other queries, please do not hesitate to reach out to the ePMO team on EPMO@cityoflondon.gov.uk