



Annual Council Meeting
20 May 2026

**Report from the Corporate
Director Finance & Resources**

Representation of Political Groups on Committees

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Council
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
No. of Appendices:	One Appendix 1: Political Balance Rules
Background Papers:	None
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1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report fulfils the Council's duty to review and determine the representation of different political groups on certain committees at its Annual Meeting or as soon as practicable thereafter and following on from the local borough election held on the 7 May 2026.
- 1.2 The report also considers the position regarding the appointment of Political Assistants following the outcome of the local election and designation of the Principal Opposition Group.
- 1.3 The current membership of the Council consists of 57 councillors, which has been used as the basis of this review, with all members expected to have signed their

declaration of acceptance of office prior to the Annual Council Meeting. Following the review, the Council will have a duty to make allocations and then appointments (where necessary) to those committees giving effect to the wishes of the political group allocated the seats.

2.0 Recommendations

Full Council is asked:

- (1) To agree the size of each committee.
- (2) To agree (where the rules of political balance apply) the allocation of seats on committees to each of the Council's political groups as set out in the report.
- (3) To make appointments to those committees (as set out within Item 10 of this agenda) giving effect to the wishes of the political group allocated the seats; and
- (4) To note that the political balance on sub-committees will be reviewed at the first meeting of the General Purposes Committee and the Licensing Committee held following the Annual Meeting.
- (5) Given the current membership of both the Conservative and Liberal Democrats Groups, to agree the designation of one of these Groups as the Principal Opposition Group.
- (5) To agree provision for the allocation of a political assistant to eligible Groups, on the basis detailed within section 3.15 – 3.19 of the report.

3.0 Detail

3.1 Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities & Strategic Context

- 3.1.1 The allocation of seats on each of the Council's committees to which the political balance rules apply supports delivery of the borough plan by enabling the Council's decision-making bodies to operate transparently and effectively whilst also supporting and promoting confidence in the good governance of the council.

3.2 Background

Representation of Political Groups

- 3.1 The Council is required to review and determine the representation of different political groups on certain committees at, or as soon as practicable, after its Annual Meeting and following on from a local borough election.
- 3.2 As soon as practicable after the review, the Council then has a duty to determine the allocation to the different political groups of all seats on the relevant committees. The allocation is determined by applying the "political balance rules" prescribed by the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and supplemented by the Local

Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990. These rules are set out in Appendix 1 to this report and are designed to ensure that the political composition of the Council's decision-making and deliberative committees, as far as possible, replicates the political composition of Full Council. Subsequently, the Council has a duty to make appointments to those committees (as detailed within Item 10 of this agenda) giving effect to the wishes of the political group allocated the seat(s).

3.3 The Committees to which the political balance rules apply have similar duties in relation to any sub-committees they may have.

3.4 Following the outcome of the local borough election on 7 May 2026 the new composition of political groups as a percentage of overall membership on the Council now stands as follows:

- 26 Labour Group councillors – representing 45.61% of the total council membership.
- 11 Conservative Group councillors – representing 19.30% of the total council membership.
- 11 Liberal Democrat councillors – representing 19.30% of the total council membership.
- 9 Green councillors – representing 15.79% of the total council membership.

3.5 According to the political balance rules, a political group for this purpose is a group of two or more members.

3.6 Table 1 below sets out the 5 ordinary committees of the Council to which the political balance rules apply and the size of each committee (excluding any non-voting co-opted committee members in accordance with the political balance rules) along with the total number of seats required to be allocated to each group reflecting the overall percentage of membership on the Council.

3.7 Members are asked to note that the whilst options regarding the final total of ordinary committee seats to which the political balance requirements will fully apply remains subject to review with each political group, the following has been provided for illustrative purposes as an initial outline based on the current total of **38** ordinary committee seats to which the political balance requirements will apply. An update on the final total and breakdown in terms of the proportion of seats allocated between the political groups on each of the relevant ordinary committees will be provided in advance of the Annual Council Meeting, following the outcome of the ongoing discussions with the respective Groups.

3.8 On the basis set out in 3.7 above, the breakdown regarding the proportion of seats each political group is entitled to (based on their percentage of total council membership) would be as follows:

- Labour Group – 17.33 seats = 17 seats*
- Conservative Group – 7.33 seats = 7 seats*
- Liberal Democrat Group – 7.33 seats = 7 seats*
- Green Group – 6.01 seats = 6 seats

*All of these groups can lay claim to the final available seat to be allocated, so it will be for Full Council to decide which Group receives that final seat, which to match the current membership would be on the Audit & Standards Committee.

Table 1

Ordinary Committees	Size	Labour Group 26 45.61%	Conservative Group 11 19.30%	Liberal Democrats Group 11 19.30%	Green Group 9 15.79%
General Purposes Committee	8	4	1	2*	1
Planning Committee	8	4	2*	1	1
Audit & Standards Committee	7	3**	1**	1**	1
Corporate Parenting Committee	5	2	1	1	1
Licensing Committee	10	4	2	2	2
Total seats	38	17	7	7	6
Entitlement (based on a proportion of total members)		17	7	7	6

*There is a degree of discretion as to how the allocated number of seats are distributed across the ordinary committees. The aim is to match the political make-up of the council as far as reasonably practicable. This means the allocation of seats on the General Purposes Committee and the Planning Committee to the Conservative Group and Liberal Democrats Group could be vice versa.

** Full Council to agree which of these groups would receive the final seat available for allocation.

3.9 There are other committees to which the political balance rules apply but only principles (a), (b) and (d) (see Appendix 1, paragraph 3). Namely, the existing Scrutiny Committees and the Audit & Standards Advisory Committee.

3.10 Table 2 below confirms the size and make-up of these Committees.

Table 2

Other Committees	Size	Labour Group 26 45.61%	Conservative Group 11 19.30%	Liberal Democrats Group 11 19.30%	Group Green 9 15.79%
Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee	11 (plus 4 voting co-opted members and 2 non-voting co-opted members)	5	2	2	2
Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee	11	5	2	2	2
Audit & Standards Advisory Committee (plus up to 4 voting co-opted members)	7	3**	1**	1**	1

**Based on current committee size, Full Council will have to decide which of these groups is allocated a second seat. Note: the established practice is that the councillor membership of the Audit & Standards Committee matches the Audit & Standards Advisory Committee because usually the latter meets just before the former.

3.11 Subsequent to allocating seats, the Council has a duty to make appointments to the specified committees giving effect to the wishes of the political group allocated the seats. The appointments to each committee being made by the respective political groups will be set out within the report to be considered as Agenda Item 10 on the Council summons.

3.12 The political balance rules do not apply to the Health and Wellbeing Board but it has been previously agreed that this Board comprise four Cabinet Members and one

opposition Member with the Principal Opposition Group to be allocated the available seat. Given this was based on the arrangements prior to the last election, it will, however, be possible (should it be required) for members to review this arrangement in light of the new political make up of the Council.

Principal Opposition Group

- 3.13 Given the political make up of the Council now includes two groups comprising the same number of members (outside of the Group with the largest number of councillors) there will be a need to agree which of these forms the Principal Opposition.
- 3.14 The designation of a group as Principal Opposition in instances where two or more groups have the same number of members is a matter for the authority to decide, with Council therefore being asked to confirm which group will form the Principal Opposition. The other Group will be designated as the Second Opposition Group for the purpose of the Members Allowance Scheme.

Political Assistants

- 3.15 Section 9 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 provides for the appointment of political assistants, as follows:
- 3.16 Where a council decides to make such appointments specific rules apply which vary depending on the size and number of the political parties. Given the change in political balance on the Council following the local borough election in May 2026, the following provisions will now apply:

Where the members of a relevant authority are divided into different political groups, a group shall qualify for a post if—

- (a) the membership of that group comprises at least one-tenth of the membership of the authority;*
- (b) the number of the other groups (if any) which are larger than that group does not exceed two; and*
- (c) where the number of the other groups which are the same size as or larger than that group exceeds two, the authority have determined that that group should be a group to which a post is allocated;*

and it shall be the duty of a relevant authority, before making any allocation for the purposes of this section in a case in which there are groups which would qualify for posts if paragraph (c) above were disregarded, to make such determinations under that paragraph as secure that there are no more nor less than three groups which do qualify for a post.

- 3.17 As set out above, Section 9 (6) and (7) of the Act provide that each of the three largest political groups on a relevant authority is entitled to have one Political Assistant, provided they have at least 10% of the members of the authority. Whilst

all four political groups in Brent comprise at least 10% of the members of the authority it would, however, only be the Labour, Conservative & Liberal Democrats Groups that qualify for a Political Assistant as the largest three political groups.

3.18 No appointments to the posts can be made until posts have been established for all qualifying groups, however, only one post can be appointed to any political group.

3.19 These appointments will be made in accordance with the Local Government (Assistants for Political Groups) (Remuneration) (England) Order 2021 and accompanying guidance.

4.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

4.1 The proposed allocation of seats between Committees has been subject to consultation with each political group.

5.0 Financial Considerations

5.1 There are no financial considerations arising directly from this report.

6.0 Legal Considerations

6.1 These are addressed in the main body of the report.

7.0 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

7.1 Under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (Act), the Council has a duty when exercising their functions to have 'due regard' to the need:

- a) To eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act;
- b) Advance equality of opportunity; and
- c) Foster good relations between those who share a "protected characteristic" and those who do not.

7.2 This is the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). The 'protected characteristics' are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

7.3 The purpose of the duty is to enquire into whether a proposed decision disproportionately affects people with a protected characteristic. In other words, the indirect discriminatory effects of a proposed decision. Due regard is the regard that is appropriate in all the circumstances.

7.4 There are no direct equalities implications arising from this report at this stage.

8.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

8.1 None directly arising from this report.

9.0 Human Resources/Property Considerations (if appropriate)

9.1 None directly arising from this report.

10.0 Communication Considerations

10.1 None directly arising from this report.

Report sign off:

Minesh Patel

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