



Annual Council Meeting 22 May 2024

Report from the Corporate Director Law & Governance

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.
- 1.2 The current membership of the Council consists of 57 councillors, which has been used as the basis for the annual review. Following this review, the Council will then have a duty to make 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 at Item 9 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.

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

- 3.2.1 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.
- 3.2.2 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 giving effect to the wishes of the political group allocated the seat(s).
- 3.2.3 The Committees that the political balance rules apply to have similar duties in relation to any sub-committees they may have.
- 3.2.4 On the basis that the overall membership of the Council stands at 57, the composition of political groups as a percentage of overall membership is as follows:

- 49 Labour Group councillors – representing 85.97% of the total council membership;
- 5 Conservative Group councillors – representing 8.77% of the total council membership;
- 3 Liberal Democrat councillors – representing 5.26% of the total council membership.

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

3.2.6 Table 1 below sets out the 5 ordinary committees of the Council to which the political balance rules apply; the size of each committee (excluding any non-voting co-opted committee members in accordance with the political balance rules); the total number of seats required to be allocated; the number of seats each political group is entitled to based on the number of group members.

3.2.7 There are a total of **38** ordinary committee seats to which the political balance requirements will formally apply. Based on the overall council membership, the breakdown regarding the proportion of seats each political group is therefore entitled to on these committees is as follows:

- Labour Group – 33 seats
- Conservative Group – 3 seats
- Liberal Democrat Group – 2 seats

3.2.8 This has resulted in one seat on each of the 5 ordinary committees to which the political balance rules apply, being allocated between the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Groups. The allocation of seats between Committees has been agreed between the respective Groups, with the proposed division as follows.

Table 1

Ordinary Committees	Size	Labour Group 49 85.97%	Conservative Group 5 8.77%	Liberal Democrats Group 3 5.26%
General Purposes Committee	8	7	0	1
Planning Committee	8	7	1	0
Audit & Standards Committee	7	6	1	0
Corporate Parenting Committee	5	4	1	0

Licensing Committee	10	9	0	1
Total seats	38	33	3	2
Entitlement (based on a proportion of total members)		33	3	2

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

3.2.10 Table 2 below confirms the size and make-up of these Committees, with the Conservative and Liberal Democrats groups both entitled (given the size of each committee) to be allocated a seat on both Scrutiny Committees.

Other Committees	Size	Labour Group	Conservative Group	Liberal Democrats Group
		49 85.97%	5 8.77%	3 5.26%
Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee	11 (plus 4 voting co-opted members and 2 non-voting co-opted members)	9	1	1
Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee	11	9	1	1
Audit & Standards Advisory Committee	7 (plus up to 3 voting co-opted members)	6	1	0

3.2.11 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. This review has not led to any change in the overall allocation of seats on Committees following the previous review undertaken at the Annual Council meeting in May 2023. 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 9.

- 3.2.12 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 and this will continue following this review, with the Conservative Group as the Principal Opposition Group allocated the available seat.

4. 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

- 5.2 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, 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:

Debra Norman

Corporate Director Law &
Governance