



**General Purposes Committee**  
28 May 2024

**Report from the Corporate Director of  
Law & Governance**

**Review of Representation of Political Groups and  
Appointments**

<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Key or Non-Key Decision:</b>	Non-key
<b>Open or Part/Fully Exempt:</b> (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
<b>No. of Appendices:</b>	None
<b>Background Papers:</b>	None
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## 1.0 Summary

- 1.1 At its Annual meeting on 22 May 2024, Full Council is due to review and determine the representation of political groups on its main committees and subsequently make appointments to these, in accordance with the wishes of the political groups concerned. As soon as practicable after such a review, this Committee is also required to review and determine the representation of political groups on its Sub-committees and then make appointments giving effect to the wishes of the political groups allocated seats.
- 1.2 The current membership of the Council consists of 57 councillors, which has been used as the basis for the annual review.

## 2.0 Recommendations

That on the basis of the current membership of the Council, the Committee:

- 2.1 Agrees the size of each sub-committee to be appointed by the Committee;
- 2.2 Agrees the allocation of seats to political groups on each of the sub-committees in accordance with political balance rules; and

2.3 Appoints Chairs and Vice-Chairs, Members and Substitutes to each Sub-committee under Item 7 of the agenda giving effect to the wishes of the political group(s) allocated the seats.

### **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**

3.2.1 As General Purposes Committee has three Sub-committees, it has a statutory duty to review and determine the representation of political groups on its Sub-committees as soon as practicable after any review undertaken by Full Council. The Committee then has a duty to make appointments to the Sub-committees giving effect to the wishes of the political group allocated seats.

3.2.2 The allocation of seats is determined by applying the political balance principles prescribed by the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and supplemented by the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990. These principles are set out below and are designed to ensure that the political composition of committees and sub-committees, as far as reasonably practicable, replicate the political composition of Full Council.

3.2.3 The political balance principles are:

- (i) That not all the seats on the sub-committee are allocated to the same political group.
- (ii) That the majority of the seats on the sub-committee are allocated to a particular political group if the number of persons belonging to that group is a majority of the Council's membership.
- (iii) Subject to paragraphs (i) and to (ii) above, that the number of the seats on the sub-committee which are allocated to each political group bears the same proportion to the number of all the seats on that sub-committee as is borne by the number of members of that group to the membership of the Council.

3.2.4 There is a 4th principle (that each political group is allocated the same proportion of the total seats across all the ordinary committee of the Council (38 in total) as the proportion of the members of the Council that belong to that group). This covers the appointment of ordinary committees and was applied to these bodies at the Annual Council meeting. The legislation does not apply this principle to the appointment of sub-committees.

3.2.5 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.

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

3.2.7 The application of the three principles listed in 3.2.3 above therefore results in the following allocation of seats:

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Sub Committee</b>	<b>Size</b>	<b>Labour 49 (85.97%)</b>	<b>Conservative 5 (8.77%)</b>	<b>Liberal Democrats 3 (5.26%)</b>
General Purposes	Pension Fund Sub-Committee	7	6	1	0
	Senior Staff Appointments Sub-Committee	5	4	1	0
	Senior Staff Appeals Sub-Committee	5	4	1	0

3.2.8 As the main General Purposes Committee has been constituted as an ordinary committee of the Council, the additional political balance principle (set out in 3.3.4 above) was applied to the allocation of seats on that body. This has resulted in the Opposition seat on the main Committee being allocated to the Liberal Democrats Group. However, the political balance rules applying to the appointment of Sub Committees by General Purposes Committee requires this calculation to be based only on the size of each individual sub-committee. As a result, the available opposition seats are all required to be allocated to the Conservative Group, based on the size of the group as a percentage of the Council’s overall membership.

3.2.9 Subsequent to allocating seats, the General Purposes Committee has a duty to make appointments to their specified sub committees giving effect to the wishes of the political group(s) allocated the seats. The appointments to each sub-committee being made by the respective political groups has been set out within the paper listed as Item 7 on the agenda.

#### **4.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement**

4.1 The proposed allocation of seats on each Sub Committee has been subject to consultation with each individual group on the Council.

## **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, 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