

Political Balance and Allocation of Seats to Political Groups

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Lead Member/Relevant Portfolio Holder	Monitoring Officer

Corporate Priority:	All
Relevant Ward Member(s):	N/A
Date of consultation with Ward Member(s):	N/A
Exempt Information:	No

1 Summary

- 1.1 To approve the revised political balance calculations and allocation of seats on committees in accordance with statutory requirements (as set out in the report) following recent changes which alter the political balance between the Groups.

2 Recommendations

That Council:	
2.1	Appoints the Scrutiny Committee and Standing Committees as set out in paragraph 5.1.1 for the municipal year 2025/26;
2.2	Agrees the terms of reference and number of voting places on the Scrutiny Committee and Standing Committees as detailed at paragraphs 5.1.2 – 5.1.4 for the municipal year 2025/26;
2.3	Approve the political balance calculation at paragraphs 5.2 – 5.2.4;
2.4	Approve the allocation of seats on the Committees as set out in paragraph 5.3.1 and Working Groups as set out in paragraph 5.4.1.

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| 2.5 | Receives nominations and make appointments to Committees and Working Groups as notified by the Group Leaders and set out in Appendix A; |
| 2.6 | Appoints non-aligned Members to their allocation of seats on Committees and Working Groups as set out in Appendix A; |
| 2.7 | Elects the Chairs and Vice Chairs for each of the Committees below: |
| 2.7.1 | Audit & Standards Committee; |
| 2.7.2 | Employment Committee; |
| 2.7.3 | Licensing Committee (Taxi and General); |
| 2.7.4 | Licensing Committee (Alcohol and Gambling); |
| 2.7.5 | Planning Committee; and |
| 2.7.6 | Scrutiny Committee. |

3 Reason for Recommendations

- 3.1 To comply with legislative and constitutional requirements the Council must appoint its committees, review the allocation of seats in accordance with political balance rules and elect Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Committees at its annual meeting.
- 3.2 To ensure that the council complies with its obligations under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (the 1989 Act) and associated Regulations, and the Licensing Act 2003.

4 Background

- 4.1 Section 15 of the 1989 Act requires the Council to review the allocation of seats to Political Groups at prescribed times, including at its annual meeting.
- 4.2 The Council's duty is to determine the allocation of seats to be filled by appointments by the authority, except the Cabinet and the Statutory Licensing Committee. The purpose is to ensure that there is proportionality across all formal activities of the Council, representing the overall political composition. It affects all formally constituted panels, committees and subcommittees which discharge functions on behalf of the authority.
- 4.3 Council previously agreed that the statutory committee for Licensing Act matters should consist of the same members as are appointed to the Licensing (regulatory) Committee and approved a delegation to the Monitoring Officer to include a provision in the Constitution to reflect this.
- 4.4 The rules in Section 15 and 16 of the 1989 Act that require allocation of seats on Committees etc. to be politically balanced apply only to political groups.
- 4.5 Independent (non-aligned) Members must however, form part of the calculation for political balance purposes. Once seats have been allocated to political groups, it is a requirement that the Council allocates the remaining seats to the non-aligned members.

5 Main Considerations

5.1 Establishment of Scrutiny Committee and Standing Committees

- 5.1.1 The Council's Constitution (Chapter 2, Part 1, Section 4) provides that the Council at its Annual Meeting must appoint at least one Scrutiny Committee and such other Committees as the Council considers appropriate to deal with matters which are neither reserved to the Council Meeting and are not Cabinet functions. The Council must also confirm the terms of reference and size of those Committees.

5.1.2 The Council's Scrutiny Committee and other Standing Committees and corresponding seats/voting places are confirmed below:

- Planning Committee (11 seats)
- Scrutiny Committee (10 seats)
- Audit & Standards Committee (10 seats)
- Employment Committee (7 seats)
- Licensing Committee (Taxi and General) (10 seats)
- Licensing Committee (Alcohol and Gambling) (10 seats)

5.1.3 The total number of seats available across all politically balanced committees is 48.

5.1.4 The Terms of Reference for the Scrutiny Committee and Standing Committees can be found at [Chapter 2, Parts 6 – 11 of the Council's Constitution](#).

5.2 Political Balance

5.2.1 To calculate the number of seats each group is entitled to there is a calculation:

- a) The number of members in each group is divided by the total number of Councillors
- b) This number is then multiplied by 100 to give the membership of each group as a percentage (%)
- c) The total number of seats available on committees is then multiplied by this percentage (%)
- d) The number is then rounded to the nearest whole number to give the number of seats

5.2.2 The proportion of seats allocated is as follows:

Members	Number	%	Proportion of seats available	Rounded to
Conservative Group	11	39.29	18.85714286	19
Labour Group	6	21.43	10.28571429	10
Independent Group	8	28.57	13.71428571	14
Non-aligned	3			5

5.2.3 The political proportionality rules in Section 15 and 16 of the 1989 Act that apply when allocating seats on Committees apply only to political groups (i.e., 19 to the Conservative Group, 10 to the Labour Group and 14 to the Independent Group).

5.2.4 Once seats have been allocated to the political groups, the authority is under a duty to allocate the remaining seats to Members who are not aligned to a political group.

5.3 Allocation of Seats

5.3.1 Using 48 as the total number of seats across all committees, the 'total' row below shows the total number of places each group is entitled to for each committee, using the calculated proportions above.

Committee	Places	Conservative	Labour	Independent	Non-aligned
Planning	11	4	2	3	2

Scrutiny	10	4	2	3	1
Audit & Standards	10	4	2	3	1
Employment	7	3	2	2	0
Licensing (Regulatory)	10	4	2	3	1
Total across all C'tees	48	19	10	14	5
Allocation	48	19	10	14	5

- 5.3.2 With each group having been allocated seats in accordance with its total proportional entitlement, Group Leaders will provide notification of the members they wish to be appointed to each Committee (detailed in Appendix A) prior to the meeting. Should any further changes be required following the meeting, the wishes of the Group will be notified in accordance with Regulation 13 of the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990 (the 1990 regulations) and further appointments may be made accordingly.
- 5.3.3 The remaining seats are then allocated to the non-aligned Members. The non-aligned Members have expressed their preferences for allocation of seats, and these are detailed in Appendix A.
- 5.3.4 The outcome now requires the Council to make the following decisions:
- To confirm appointments of the Committees above and to that size of membership
 - To allocate seats on the Committees as above to the three political groups
 - To appoint named non-aligned members to seats on the Committees

5.4 Outside Bodies and Working Groups

- 5.4.1 Whilst the following are not formal Committees, the terms of reference for these meetings do require the allocation of seats to be calculated in accordance with the political balance calculation. The allocation of seats are detailed in Appendix A.

Group Name	Joint Staff Working Group (7 seats)	Local Plans Working Group (9 seats)	Portfolio Holder Liaison Group – Housing and Communities (9 seats)	Portfolio Holder Liaison Group – Place and Prosperity (9 seats)
Conservative	3	3	4	4
Labour	2	2	2	2
Independent	2	3	3	3
Non-aligned	0	1	0	0
Totals	7	9	9	9

6 Options Considered

- 6.1 The Council must review its political balance and allocation of seats as soon as practicable following certain changes to political groups in accordance with the legislation.

7 Consultation

- 7.1 The Group Leaders have been consulted on the information presented in this report and the appendices were compiled in consultation with them wherever possible.
- 7.2 Non-aligned members have also been provided with the information presented in this report.

8 Next Steps – Implementation and Communication

- 8.1 Any changes to membership of Committees will be reflected on the Council's website page for each Committee.
- 8.2 Any mandatory training requirements will be considered and arranged as necessary for respective members.

9 Financial Implications

- 9.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Financial Implications reviewed by: Director for Corporate Services

10 Legal and Governance Implications

- 10.1 The Council's Constitution (Chapter 2, Part 1 - Section 4) sets out the business that must be included in the agenda for the Annual Council Meeting.
- 10.2 The Council must review the representation of Groups on Committees at its Annual Meeting each year (and as soon as practicable after prescribed events which alter the political balance between Groups) and determine the allocation of seats to be filled by appointments by the Council.
- 10.3 The Council must allocate seats on committees so as to give effect to the political balance rules unless there is a decision to the contrary with no member voting against.
- 10.4 The allocation of seats must conform to the principles of proportionality contained in sections 15 and 16 of the 1989 Act. There is a duty to give effect to the following principles, as far as reasonably practicable, in the order shown:
- a) Not all the seats on the body are allocated to the same political group;
 - b) A majority of the seats on a body are allocated to a group if it comprises a majority of the total membership of the authority;
 - c) Subject to (a) and (b) above, that the number of seats on ordinary committees allocated to each group bears the same proportion to the total of all seats on ordinary committees as is borne by the number of members of that group to the total membership of the authority; and
 - d) Subject to (a) to (c) above, that the number of seats on a body allocated to each group bears the same proportion to the number of seats on that body as is borne by the number of members of that group to the total membership of the authority.
- 10.5 A group must have at least two members to be legally constituted as a political group and accordingly even if aligned to, or a member of, a registered political party, a single member is not regarded as a political group; they will however, be allocated seats in accordance with paragraph 5.3.4 c) above.

- 10.6 Where the Council has members who are non-aligned, section 15(3) of the 1989 Act is modified by regulation 16 of the 1990 Regulations to read as follows:
- “15(3) Where at any time the representation of different political groups on a body to which this section applies falls to be reviewed under this section by any relevant authority or committee of a relevant authority, it shall be the duty of that authority or committee, as soon as practicable after the review to determine the allocation to each of those groups of such of the seats which fall to be filled by appointments made from time to time by that authority or committee as bear to the total of all of those seats the same proportion as is borne by the number of members of that group to the membership of the authority.”*
- 10.7 Additionally, where there are non-aligned members, section 16(2A) of the 1989 Act has effect, modified by the 1990 Regulations as follows:
- “Where appointments fall to be made to seats on a body to which section 15 applies otherwise than in accordance with a determination under that section, it shall be the duty of the authority or the committee, as the case may be, so to exercise their power to make appointments as to secure that the persons appointed to those seats are not members of any political group”.*
- 10.8 The implications of these changes to paragraph 15(3) taken with section 16(2A) is to require the Council to allocate seats to the political groups in accordance with the principles at paragraph 10.2 a) to d) above. If any are seats left over, they must be allocated to the non-aligned members.
- 10.9 Alternative arrangements which do not comply with sections 15 and 16 of the 1989 Act may be made under Section 17 of the Act by passing a resolution with no member voting against the resolution.
- 10.10 Once the allocation of seats has been agreed, the appointment of individual members will be given effect in accordance with the wishes of the relevant Group as expressed by Groups’ Leaders / Deputy Leaders in accordance with section 16 of the 1989 Act and Regulation 13 of the 1990 Regulations.

Legal Implications reviewed by: Monitoring Officer

11 Equality and Safeguarding Implications

- 11.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has not been completed because there are no service, policy or organisational changes being proposed.

12 Data Protection Implications

- 12.1 A Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA) has not been completed for the following reasons because there are no risks to the rights and freedoms of natural persons.

13 Community Safety Implications

- 13.1 There are no community implications arising from this report.

14 Environmental and Climate Change Implications

- 14.1 There are no environmental or climate change implications arising from this report.

15 Other Implications (where significant)

- 15.1 There are no other implications arising from this report.

16 Risk & Mitigation

Risk No	Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Risk
1	Failure to meet statutory and constitutional obligations.	Low	Critical	9

		Impact / Consequences			
		Negligible	Marginal	Critical	Catastrophic
Likelihood	Score/ definition	1	2	3	4
	6 Very High				
	5 High				
	4 Significant				
	3 Low			1	
	2 Very Low				
	1 Almost impossible				

Risk No	Mitigation
1	To consider the business presented in this report.

17 Background Papers.

17.1 There are no background papers.

18 Appendices

18.1 Appendix A – Committee Membership 2025/26

18.2 Appendix B – Working Group Membership 2025/26

18.3 Appendix C – Nominations for Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs 2025/26