

Report to Council

Wednesday, 8 May 2024

By the Monitoring Officer

DECISION REQUIRED



Not Exempt

Review of Political Balance and Allocation of Seats to Political Groups

Executive Summary

The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 obliges local authorities to (i) review the representation of the political groups, and, (ii) determine the allocation of committee seats to achieve a political balance. This review has taken place following a change in the composition of the political groups, as a result of the two by-elections in February 2024.

Accordingly, paragraph 3 of this report contains a summary of the required review and determination.

Recommendations

That the Council is recommended:

- i) Note the membership of the political groups contained in paragraph 3.1
- ii) Note the allocation of committee seats to each political group as noted in paragraphs 3.2 – 3.6
- iii) Resolve that the Employment Committee and the two Planning Committees are not politically balanced

Reasons for Recommendations

To comply with the proportionality requirements contained in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

Background Papers

None

Wards affected: All

Contact: Aisha Nottage, Democratic Services and Elections Manager.

Background Information

1 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 This report fulfils the Council's duty to review and determine the allocation of committee seats to achieve political balance following a change in the composition of the political groups, as a result of the two by-elections in February 2024.

2 Relevant Council policy

- 2.1 It is a statutory requirement that the review and determination the subject of this report is undertaken.

3 Details

- 3.1 The composition of the Council by Group is as follows:

Political Group	Number of Seats	Proportion of seats on the Council
Liberal Democrats	27	56.25%
Conservatives	12	25%
Green	9	18.75%

- 3.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee seats are allocated on the basis of proportionality. The seats to be allocated are as follows:

	LD	CON	GR
Overview & Scrutiny Committee (15)	8	4	3

- 3.3 The political proportionality for the remaining committees is as follows:

	LD	CON	GR
Audit Committee (7)	4	2	1
Governance Committee (9)	5	2	2
Licensing Committee (15)	8	4	3
Standards Committee (7)	4	2	1

- 3.4 Following discussion between Group Leaders, the proposed allocation of seats to each committee is as above.

- 3.5 The membership of the Planning Committees is to be allocated geographically.

- 3.6 The membership of the Employment Committee is not to be politically balanced. The constitution requires that the Leader of the Council, the Chairman of the Council and the Leader of the Opposition Group are members to this committee, with 6 non-voting co-optees.

4 Next Steps

- 4.1 Once a determination of the allocation of the seats has taken place, the Council has a duty to exercise its power to make appointments as soon as practicable thereafter, and to give effect to such wishes about who is to be appointed to the seats allocated to a particular political group as are expressed by that group.

5 Views of the Policy Development Advisory Group and Outcome of Consultations

- 5.1 Group Leaders were consulted on the allocation of seats to the committees.

6 Other Courses of Action Considered but Rejected

- 6.1 None.

7 Resource Consequences

- 7.1 None.

8 Legal Considerations and Implications

- 8.1 The relevant legal implications have been incorporated in this report.
- 8.2 Otherwise, the allocation of committee seats, as far as reasonably practicable, must give effect to the following principles:
- a) that not all the seats on the body to which appointments are made are allocated to the same political group;
 - b) that the majority of seats on the body is allocated to a particular political group if the number of persons belonging to that group is a majority of the authority's membership; and
 - c) Subject to (a) and (b) above, that the total number of seats on all the ordinary committees allocated to a particular political group reflects that group's proportion of the membership of the authority.

9 Risk Assessment

- 9.1 There are no risks associated with the content of this report.

10 Procurement implications

- 10.1 None

11. Equalities and Human Rights implications / Public Sector Equality Duty

11.1 None.

12 Environmental Implications

12.1 None.

13 Other Considerations

13.1 None.