

COUNCIL  
18 MARCH 2021

Report of the Director of Corporate and Customer Services

## **CHANGES IN POLITICAL BALANCE AND POLITICAL GROUP MEMBERSHIP**

### **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To update the membership of political groups on the Council and report on the change to the political balance of the authority.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

1. That the operation of four political groups on the Council and the detail of their designated Leaders be noted:
  - (a) Conservative Group and Councillors Richard Bright and Graham Elliott – Councillor Garry Purdy (Leader of the Council)
  - (b) Green and Independent Group – Councillor Neil Buttle
  - (c) Labour Group – Councillor Mike Ratcliffe
  - (d) Liberal Democrat Group – Councillor Steve Flitter
  
2. That the following special responsibility allowances be paid:
  - (a) Councillor Purdy - £11,793 (effective from 19 January 2021)
  - (b) Councillor Flitter - £1,617
  - (c) Councillor Buttle - £1,115
  - (d) Councillor Hobson - £5,897 (effective from 19 January 2021)

### **WARDS AFFECTED**

District-wide

### **STRATEGIC LINK**

The strategic leadership provided by councillors in discharging the functions of the Council through committees and other bodies is critical to the delivery of all priorities in the Corporate Plan.

## **1 BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 The Proper Officer is required to notify the Council of any change in the political balance of the authority or the operation of new political groups under the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990. Since the last Council meeting, the Proper Officer has received notification of changes in the membership of political groups.

- 1.2 On 19 January 2021, Councillors Richard Bright and Graham Elliott confirmed that they had formed a group with the existing Conservative Group, made up of 19 councillors. The new group is the 'Conservative Group and Councillors Richard Bright and Graham Elliott'. This group is made up of 21 Members, which means that it is the majority group on the Council.
- 1.3 On 27 February 2021, Councillor Joyce Pawley sadly died and the Council paid silent tribute to the memory of Councillor Mrs Pawley at its meeting on 4 March 2021. It was also verbally reported to that meeting that Councillor Elisa McDonagh had resigned as a councillor on 3 March 2021. The arising two vacancies has reduced the Labour Group to 3 Members.
- 1.4 Given that there are two vacant seats on the Council and the relative proximity to the Annual Meeting of the Council, it is not recommended that the Council review the entitlement to seats on committees at this meeting. A report will be presented to the Annual Meeting, following the by-elections to fill the vacancies, which will invite the Council to agree a new seat entitlement for each political group.

## 2 POLITICAL GROUPS

- 2.1 The Proper Officer has received formal notifications, under the provisions of the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990, of changes in the membership of the Council's political groups.
- 2.2 On 19 January 2021, Councillors Bright and Elliott formed an alliance with the Conservative Group of 19 Members to form a new group – known as the Conservative Group and Councillors Richard Bright and Graham Elliott – with the total membership of the group being 21 Members.
- 2.3 Following the death of Councillor Mrs Pawley and the resignation of Councillor McDonagh, the Labour Group now has 3 Members.
- 2.4 The effect of these changes means that no political group is in overall control of the authority and the political balance of the Council is now:

Name of Group	Designated Leader	Number of Members
Conservative and Councillors Richard Bright and Graham Elliott	Councillor Purdy	21
Green and Independent	Councillor Buttle	5
Labour	Councillor Ratcliffe	3
Liberal Democrat	Councillor Flitter	7

- 2.5 Councillor Swindell does not belong to a political group and for the purposes of this report he is described as a non-aligned Member.
- 2.6 Under the Members' Allowances Scheme, special responsibility allowances are paid to the two largest minority group leaders. The special responsibility allowance for a minority group leader is £231 per Member, which equals £1,155 for a group leader.

With the Labour Group now having 3 Members, Councillor Ratcliffe is no longer in receipt of a special responsibility allowance as a minority group leader.

- 2.7 The change in group membership arising from Councillor Bright and Elliott's decision to form an alliance with the Conservative Group to become a single political group also had the effect of increasing the allowance paid to Councillor Purdy from £11,331 from £11,793, and consequently the allowance paid to Councillor Hobson from £5,781 to £5,897.

### **3 ASSESSMENT**

#### *Legal*

- 3.1 The legislative requirements in respect of considering the new political balance and political group membership are covered earlier in the report. On this basis, the legal risks associated with this report are considered to be low.

#### *Financial*

- 3.2 The proposed allowances can be contained within the existing revenue budget. There are no financial risks arising from this report.

### **4 OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

- 4.1 In preparing this report, the relevance of the following factors has also been considered: prevention of crime and disorder, equalities, environmental, climate change, health, human rights, personnel and property.

### **5 CONTACT INFORMATION**

- 5.1 James McLaughlin - Director of Corporate and Customer Services & Monitoring Officer  
Tel: 01629 761281  
Email: [james.mclaughlin@derbyshiredales.gov.uk](mailto:james.mclaughlin@derbyshiredales.gov.uk)

### **6 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 6.1 Report to Council – Appointment of Committees and Review of Political Proportionality – 22 July 2020
- 6.2 Report to Council – Political Balance, Political Groups and Entitlement to Seats on Committees – 26 November 2020

### **7 ATTACHMENTS**

- 7.1 None