

Council
14 October 2021

Report of the Director of Corporate and Customer Services

MEMBERSHIP OF POLITICAL GROUPS, POLITICAL BALANCE AND ENTITLEMENT TO SEATS ON COMMITTEES

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To report on the updated membership of political groups on the Council, the change to the political balance of the authority and the revised entitlement of political groups to seats on committees for the remainder of the 2021/22 municipal year.

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the revised membership of the Labour Group be noted.
2. That Councillor O'Brien be considered a non-aligned Member for the purposes of considering committee seat entitlements for groups.
3. That the Council notes, and agrees, the entitlement of the membership of the political groups and that such entitlements have been reflected in the allocations to Committees.
4. That the nominations of the Labour Group in respect of their seat entitlements be approved.
5. That the Council approve nominations to appoint non-aligned councillors to serve on those committees where there is an entitlement to seats.

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.
- 1.2 Since the last Council meeting, Councillor Peter O'Brien has ceased to be a member of the Labour Group and has not indicated that he has joined a political group. Therefore Councillor O'Brien is considered a 'Non-Aligned' councillor for the purposes

of the political balance of the Council. The effect of this change means there are 3 Members in the Labour Group.

1.3 Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 places on local authorities the duty to allocate seats to political groups and sets out the principles to be followed when determining such allocation. The main principles, which must be satisfied sequentially, include

(a) That the number of seats on ordinary Committees/Bodies ... which are allocated to each political group bears the same proportion to the total of all the seats on the ordinary Committees of that Authority, as is borne by the Members of that group to the membership of the Authority (i.e. the allocation of the total number of seats available must mirror the political composition of the council).

(b) That the number of seats on the Body (Committee, etc.), which are allocated to each political group, bears the same proportion to the number of all the seats on that Body as is borne by the number of Members of that group to the membership of the Authority (i.e. the allocation of seats on individual committees must mirror the political composition of the council).

1.4 Local authorities are able to depart from the statutory provisions where there is unanimous agreement to do so.

1.5 Those members not in a political group are entitled to a due share of seats, although the Council will decide how to allocate seats to any non-aligned councillor

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 The Conservatives and Councillors Bright & Elliott Group continues to hold the majority of seats on the Council and is in overall control of the authority. The political balance of the Council is now:

Name of Group	Designated Leader	Number of Members
Conservative and Councillors Bright & Elliott	Councillor Purdy	22
Green and Independent	Councillor Buttle	5
Labour	Councillor Ratcliffe	3
Liberal Democrat	Councillor Flitter	7

2.3 Councillors O'Brien and Swindell do not belong to a political group and for the purposes of this report are designated as non-aligned Members.

3 ENTITLEMENT TO SEATS

3.1 The allocation process must be applied 'so far as is reasonably practicable' to achieve a balanced outcome. The allocation of seats to the four political groups and non-aligned is determined by the following formula:

$$\frac{\text{Number of Members in a political group}}{\text{Total Number of Members of the Council (39)}} \times \text{Number of Seats to be allocated}$$

3.2 For the 86 seats available in applying principle (a) in paragraph 1.3, this gives:

Political Group	Seat Entitlement
Conservatives and Councillors Bright & Elliott	49
Green and Independent	11
Labour	6
Liberal Democrats	15
Non-Aligned	5

3.3 Application of principle (b) in paragraph 2.1 of this report, relating to the number of seats on individual committees, gives the following:

	Membership	Conservative Group and Cllrs Bright & Elliott	Green and Independent Group	Labour Group	Liberal Democrat Group	Non-aligned Members
		22	5	3	7	2
Committees						
Governance and Resources	17	10	2	1	3	1
Community and Environment	17	10	2	1	3	1
Planning	13	7	2	1	2	1
Licensing and Appeals	13	7	2	1	2	1
Joint Consultative	6	3	1	0	1	0
Joint ICT	3	2	0	0	1	0
Constitution Working Group	7	4	1	1	1	0
Local Plan Advisory Group	10	6	1	1	2	1
TOTALS	86	49	11	6	15	5

3.4 This calculation enables all of the political groups to take up a proportion of the seats on committees that matches their overall entitlement.

4 NOMINATIONS TO SEATS

4.1 The Labour Group has made the following nominations to committees and working groups for the remainder of the current municipal year in light of the change in political balance:

Committee	Member(s)	Substitute
Community and Environment	Councillor Mike Ratcliffe	Councillor Peter Slack
Governance and Resources	Councillor Mike Ratcliffe	Councillor Dawn Greatorex
Licensing and Appeals	Councillor Dawn Greatorex	N/A
Planning	Councillor Peter Slack	Councillor Dawn Greatorex
Local Plan Advisory Group	Councillor Mike Ratcliffe	
Constitution Working Group	Councillor Mike Ratcliffe	
Climate Change Working Group	Councillor Peter Slack	
Clean and Green Review	Councillor Peter Slack	

4.2 At the time of writing this report, nominations to the revised entitlement of the non-aligned councillors have been sought and will be reported for approval at the meeting.

5 ASSESSMENT

5.1 Legal

The legislative requirements in respect of political balance and entitlement to seats are set out earlier in this report. The recommended approach will reduce the legal risk to the authority and on this basis, the legal risks associated with this report are considered to be low.

5.2 Financial

The proposed allowances can be contained within the existing revenue budget. The financial risk is therefore assessed as low.

6 OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 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.

7 CONTACT INFORMATION

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8 BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

9 ATTACHMENTS

None