

Decision of:	Managing Director	Date:	26 February 2024
Subject:	Review of Political Balance on Committees and Various Appointments		
Report Of:	Head of Paid Service		
Wards Affected:	All		
Key Decision:	No	Budget/Policy Framework:	No
Contact Officer:	Tanya Davies, Policy and Governance Manager		
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Appendices:	None		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To consider changes to the membership of committees to ensure statutory political balance following Councillor Dr Collette Finnegan's move to become a Liberal Democrat Councillor.
- 1.2 To note any appointments to vacant seats on committees and outside bodies resulting from the above.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 In accordance with Part 3D of the Constitution, the Managing Director **RESOLVES** to:
 - (1) Note that no changes be made to makeup of committees as a result of changes to the political makeup of the Council.
 - (2) Receive and note the following nominations to Committees and Outside Bodies as required by the changes to political balance:
 - Licensing and Enforcement Committee – 1 vacant seat (Conservative) – Councillor Evans.
 - Police and Crime Panel - 1 vacant seat (Conservative) – Councillor Hudson.
 - Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 1 vacant seat (Conservative) – Councillor Dee.

3.0 Background and Key Issues

- 3.1 Councillor Dr Collette Finnegan became a Liberal Democrat Councillor on 20 February 2024. There are now 21 Conservative, 14 Liberal Democrat, 2 Labour and 2 Community Independent Group Councillors. Consequently, there is a need to review the political balance of the Council and make any necessary changes to the political composition of committees and appointments to outside bodies.

3.2 Table 1 below indicates the political balance of the Council before and after the changes:

	Old Composition		New Composition	
	Seats	%	Seats	%
Conservative	22	56.41	21	53.85
Liberal Democrat	13	33.33	14	35.90
Labour	2	5.13	2	5.13
Community Independent Group	2	5.13	2	5.13

3.3 When applied to the total number of committee seats (56) seats these percentages give the following aggregate entitlement (rounded up/down to the nearest whole seat) for each Group:

Conservative	53.85% of 56 =	30 (30.16)
Liberal Democrat	35.9% of 56 =	20 (20.10)
Labour	5.13% of 56 =	3 (2.87)
Community Independent	5.13% of 56 =	3 (2.87)

Variance in total seats = 0

3.4 When the same percentages are applied to the number of seats on each committee/body they give the following provisional entitlement to seats on each committee/body, rounded up or down to the nearest whole seat (the numbers in brackets represent any changes to the current committee composition):

Committee	Size	Con	Lib Dem	Lab	Comm Ind	Seat Variance
Overview & Scrutiny Committee	16	9	6 (+1)	1	1	+1
Planning Committee	12	6 (-1)	4	1 (+1)*	1	0
Licensing and Enforcement Committee	12	6 (-1)	4	1	1 (+1)*	0
Audit and Governance Committee	8	4 (-1)	3	0	0	-1
General Purposes Committee	8	4 (-1)	3	0	0	-1
	56	29	20	3	3	-1

*there is an existing agreement in place that provides for the Labour Group having one seat on the Licensing and Enforcement Committee and the Community Independent Group having one seat on the Planning Committee.

3.5 The number of seats based on proportionality and each political party's entitlement is therefore as follows:

	Provisional allocation	Entitlement to seats on committees/bodies based on proportionality/Widdicombe principles	Variation
Conservative	30	29	-1
Liberal Democrat	20	20	0
Labour	3	3	0
Community	3	3	0

Independent			
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3.6 The calculation above results in a total variance of -1 seats across all committees/bodies subject to political proportionality. To reach the total available number of seats (56), and for reasons explained below, it is necessary to adjust the allocations.

3.7 The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990 require that the majority of the seats on each committee are allocated to the Group with the majority of the seats on the Council. The seat allocations in the table at paragraph 3.4 do not result in compliance with this requirement, therefore, it is necessary for the Conservative Group seat allocation to remain unchanged, as the Group already has the minimum number of seats that must be allocated to the Group in order to maintain the required majority on each committee. Therefore, it is proposed that no changes are made at this time and the following allocations are retained:

Committee	Size	Con	Lib Dem	Comm Ind	Lab	Seat Variance
Overview & Scrutiny Committee	16	9	5	1	1	0
Planning Committee	12	7	4	1	0	0
Licensing and Enforcement Committee	12	7	4	0	1	0
Audit and Governance Committee	8	5	3	0	0	0
General Purposes Committee	8	5	3	0	0	0
	56	33	19	2	2	0

3.8 The number of seats based on proportionality and each political party's entitlement is therefore as follows:

	Entitlement to seats on committees/bodies based on proportionality/Widdicombe principles	Provisional allocation	Variation
Conservative	30	33	+3
Liberal Democrat	20	19	-1
Community Independent	3	2	-1
Labour	3	2	-1

3.9 Group Leaders have been consulted and conformed that they are content that no changes are made at this time.

3.10 Similarly, there are no changes required to the makeup of bodies or working groups that are not formally subject to political proportionality.

3.11 Therefore, the only changes required at this time are for the Conservative Group to nominate Members to take up any seats/positions vacated by Councillor Dr Finnegan. These are detailed in the recommendations.

4.0 Social Value Considerations

4.1 None

5.0 Environmental Considerations

5.1 None.

6.0 Alternative Options Considered

6.1 None

7.0 Reasons for Recommendations

7.1 To comply with statutory requirements to achieve and maintain political balance on Committees and to fill any vacant roles and seats on committees.

8.0 Future Work and Conclusions

8.1 None

9.0 Financial Implications

9.1 None

(Financial Services have been consulted in the preparation this report.)

10.0 Legal Implications

10.1 The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990 require the overall political balance of Council to be reflected in Committees (so far as possible) and to review the political balance when necessary (for example where the political balance changes as a result of a by-election). This report seeks to comply with those obligations.

(One Legal have been consulted in the preparation this report.)

11.0 Risk & Opportunity Management Implications

11.1 None

12.0 People Impact Assessment (PIA) and Safeguarding:

12.1 A PIA is not required.

13.0 Other Corporate Implications

Community Safety

13.1 None

Staffing & Trade Union

13.2 None

Background Documents: None