

**COUNCIL**  
**18 JULY 2024**

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**REVIEW OF POLITICAL BALANCE – CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

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**Councillor Stephen Harker, Leader**

**Responsible Director -  
Elizabeth Davison, Group Director of Operations**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To advise Council of the outcome of a review to the political balance of the Authority resulting from a change to the membership of a political group.

**Summary**

2. Since the last review of the political balance of the Council in May 2024 there has been a change to the political make-up of the Council, following Councillor Pease's resignation from the Conservative Group to sit as an Independent Member.
3. Political Groups are allocated seats on the committees in accordance with political balance rules, which are set out in the report.
4. As a result of the change to the political balance the Council is now required to review the allocation of seats to political groups.

**Recommendation**

5. It is recommended that Council :-
  - (a) Notes the change to the political balance of the Council.
  - (b) Approves the allocation of seats as set out in para 14 of this report.
  - (c) Agrees to the re-allocation of two additional seats to an Independent Member. One seat on the Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee (with a reduction of one seat on this Committee from the Conservative Group) and one seat on the Members Standards Hearing Committee (with a reduction of one seat on this Committee from the Conservative Group).

**Reason**

6. To reflect the changed political balance of the Council and to comply with legislation.

**Elizabeth Davison**  
**Group Director of Operations**

**Background Papers**

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report

Shirley Wright Extension 5998

S17 Crime and Disorder	The report contributes to the prevention of crime and disorder, in a number of ways, through the involvement of Councillors in the work of those Committees.
Health and Wellbeing	The appointment of Councillors to the various Committees will enable the health and well-being of the people of the Borough to be highlighted through the work, policies and decisions of those Committees
Carbon Impact and Climate Change	The appointment of Councillors, will enable any carbon impact issues to be considered in the development of policies and other decisions through the work of those Committees.
Diversity	The report does not directly contribute to diversity, however the appointment of Councillors to the Committees will enable any diversity issues to be considered through the work of those Committees.
Wards Affected	This report does not immediately affect any wards within the Borough.
Groups Affected	This report does not have any direct impact on the various community groups, however, the work of the Committee may have an affect on those groups.
Budget and Policy Framework	The appointment of Councillors will enable any Budget and Policy Framework issues to be considered when making decisions.
Key Decision	This is a non Executive decision.
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision.
Council Plan	The report contributes to the delivery of the objectives of the Council Plan in a number of ways through the involvement of Councillors in the work of those Committees.
Efficiency	There are no direct efficiencies to the Council from the information within the report, however, the appointment of Councillors to the Committees will enable any efficiencies to be identified in the work of those Committees.
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers

## MAIN REPORT

### Information and Analysis

7. The Council must allocate seats on committees to political groups in accordance with political balance rules. The rules for the allocation of seats are set out in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990.
8. Section 15(5) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 sets out the principles as follows :-
  - (a) not all the seats on the body are allocated to the same political group;
  - (b) that the majority of the seats on the body is allocated to a particular political group if the number of persons belonging to that group is a majority in full council;
  - (c) subject to paragraphs (a) and (b) above, that the number of seats on the ordinary committees of a relevant authority 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 number of members of that group to the membership of the authority; and
  - (d) subject to paragraphs (a) to (c) above, that the number of the seats on the body 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.
9. Following the resignation of Councillor Pease as a member of the Conservative Group and notification of his intention to become an Independent Member, it is necessary to review the political balance and determine the allocation of seats on committees to ensure they reflect the revised balance.
10. The current composition of the Council is Labour 24 Members, Conservative 13 Members, Greens 7 Members, Liberal Democrats 3 Members and Independents 3 Members.

### Political Balance

11. The Committees to which the political balance rules apply are sometimes referred to as Counting Committees. The process for allocation is to count up the aggregate number of seats across all the counting committees and then work out then overall number of seats to be allocated to particular groups according to their strength and also to Independent Members. Individual Committees are then considered by overall size and the number of seats is calculated by reference to the percentage representation individual groups/independent Members. Seats are then allocated to individual committees.
12. Allocating seats in a proportionate way on individual committee to reflect the group/political distribution of members as a whole is more problematic the smaller committees become in size but also by the greater number of differing groups. This will mean that it may not be possible to reflect the political balance on every committee, particularly for members of smaller groups, but balance will be sought as far as is reasonably practicable.

13. In respect of this Council, the number of Counting seats available is 104 as follows :-

**Table 1**

<b>Counting Committees</b>	<b>Seats</b>
Human Resources Committee	11
Members Standards Hearing Committee	5
Audit Committee	6
LEA Governors Committee	4
Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee	10
Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee	10
Adults Scrutiny Committee	10
Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee	10
Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee	10
Planning Committee	14
Licensing Committee	14
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>104</b>

14. Using 104 as the total number of seats across the counting committees and, following the resignation of Councillor Pease from the Conservative Group, the total number of seats each Group is entitled to is shown in the table below.

**Table 2**

<b>GROUP</b>	<b>NO. OF MEMBERS</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>% OF SEATS</b>	<b>SEATS ALLOCATED (ROUNDED)</b>
Conservatives	13	26	27.04	27
Labour	24	48	49.92	50
Green	7	14	14.56	15
Liberal Democrats	3	6	6.24	6
Independent (non-aligned)	3	6	6.24	6

15. The 104 seats are currently (as agreed by Annual Council in May 2024) allocated as follows :-

**Table 3**

<b>COMMITTEE</b>	<b>LAB</b>	<b>CON</b>	<b>GREENS</b>	<b>LIB DEM</b>	<b>IND (Non-aligned)</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Human Resources Committee	5	3	1	1	1	11
Members Standards Hearing Committee	2	2	1			5
Audit Committee	3	2	1			6
LEA Governors Committee	2	1	1			4
Communities and Local Services Scrutiny Committee	5	3	1	1		10
Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee	5	2	1	1	1	10
Adults Scrutiny Committee	5	2	2		1	10
Economy and Resources Scrutiny Committee	5	3	1	1		10
Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee	5	3	2			10
Planning Committee	7	4	2	1		14
Licensing Committee	6	4	2	1	1	14
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>104</b>

### **Revised Composition**

16. As Members will see from table 3 above, the Conservative Group are currently over represented by two seats and these two seats need to be re-allocated to an Independent Member to ensure the overall political balance of the Council is maintained.

### **Review**

17. In reviewing the political make up of Committees, it is suggested that the two Independent seats should be allocated as follows:
- One on the Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee, and
  - One the Members' Standard Hearing Committee.

In both cases the Conservative Group will have one seat less on each of these committees.

### **Working Groups**

18. The Council has established two Working Groups, the Climate Change Working Group and the Council Decision-Making and Scrutiny Working Group and whilst these are not formal Committees, the terms of reference for these groups do require the allocation of seats to be calculated in accordance with the political balance calculation.

19. Table 4 sets out the current political balance of these Working Groups

**Table 4**

<b>GROUP NAME</b>	<b>NO OF SEATS</b>	<b>LAB</b>	<b>CONS</b>	<b>GREENS</b>	<b>LIB DEMS</b>	<b>IND (NON-ALIGNED)</b>
Climate Change Working Group	5	2	1	1	1	0
Council Decision Making and the Scrutiny Process	10	5	3	1	1	0

20. Having reviewed the political balance on the Council, it is considered that the two working groups continue to meet the political balance requirements and no further changes are required to the membership on those Groups.

### **Outcome of Consultation**

21. No formal consultation has taken place on the report other than with the relevant Group Leaders