

COUNCIL APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES

1 Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to consider the impact on the political balance of the Council, the allocation of Committee seats and appointment of Chair of two committees following a Councillor's decision to sit as an independent member.

2 Details

Background

- 2.1 On 12th February 2024, Councillor Roger Seabourne resigned from the Liberal Democrat Group, electing to sit as an independent councillor. As a result, review of the Council's political proportionality is required.

- 2.2 In addition, Councillor Seabourne had been appointed to act as Chairman of the Regulatory Services and Licensing Committees; a position normally held by a member of the majority group. As Councillor Seabourne is no longer part of the majority group it will be necessary for a new Chairman to be appointed to these Committees.

Review of Political Proportionality

- 2.3 Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 imposes a duty on the District Council to review the allocation of seats on its committees between political groups as soon as reasonably possible following any change to the political groups.
- 2.4 Political groups are allocated seats proportionate to their size, subject to the majority group being first given a majority of seats on the committees.

Number of Seats on Committees

- 2.5 The table below shows the number of seats allocated to each committee:

Committee	Number of Seats
Council Tax Setting Committee	5
Planning Committee	11
Regulatory Services Committee	11
Licensing Committee	11
Policy and Resources Committee	13
Infrastructure, Housing and Economic Development Committee	11
Leisure, Environment and Community Committee	11
Audit Committee	9
TOTAL	82

- 2.6 In accordance with the legislation, the following principles should apply to the allocation of seats as far as reasonably practicable:

- i. That not all the seats on the body to which appointments are being made are allocated to the same political group;
- ii. That the majority of the seats on each committee are allocated to a particular political group if the number of persons belonging to that group is a majority of the authority's membership;
- iii. Subject to (1) and (2) above, when allocating seats to a political group, the total number of their seats across all the ordinary committees of the Council, must reflect their proportion of the authority's membership; and
- iv. Subject to (1) to (3) above, that the number of seats on each committee is as far as possible in proportion to the group's membership of the authority.

2.7 The political balance of the Council can be calculated by using the following formula:

$$\text{No. of Group Members}/39 \times 100$$

2.8 Following the above changes to Group numbers, the political balance of the Council is as follows:

	Liberal Democrat	Conservative	Labour	Green	Independent	Total
Number of Councillors	21	12	3	2	1*	39
Proportion (%)	53.9	30.8	7.7	5.1	2.6	100.0

*It should be noted that the minimum number required to make up a political group is 2

2.9 The majority of seats on each committee has to be allocated to the political group that forms the majority of the authority's membership to comply with the second principle (paragraph 2.6ii above).

2.10 The seats will need to be shared out proportionately across the committees to ensure that the third principle (paragraph 2.5iii above) is applied. The fourth principle is then applied to ensure that the seats then allocated are not unfairly weighted. A Group's seat on a committee will be allocated automatically in terms of whole numbers, with numbers rounded up or down to the nearest whole number as appropriate.

Changes to Committees

2.11 The review of political proportionality means that there is one vacancy on the Licensing and Regulatory Committees for the Liberal Democrats to fill.

2.12 It must be borne in mind that any councillor filling the vacant seat on the Licensing Committee must have completed appropriate training prior to sitting at their first meeting of the Committee.

3 Options and Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 No alternative options. The Council is obligated to ensure that the political make up of their committees is politically proportionate.

4 Policy/Budget Reference and Implications

4.1 There are no direct policy consequences arising from this report.

5 Financial Implications

5.1 There are no direct policy consequences arising from this report.

6 Legal Implications

6.1 Legal implications are contained in the main body of this report.

7 Equal Opportunities Implications

7.1 There are no direct equal opportunities implications arising from this report.

8 Recommendations

8.1 Council notes the political proportionality of committees set out at annex 1.

8.2 Council appoints the Member(s) nominated by the Liberal Democrat group to the vacant seat on the Licensing Committee and Regulatory Services Committee.

8.3 Council appoints the Member(s) nominated by the Liberal Democrat Group to be Chair of Regulatory Services Committee and Licensing Committee.

Annexes

Annex 1 – Schedule of Political Proportionality of Committees