

COUNCIL, 24 JULY 2024

SUBJECT: POLITICAL BALANCE OF THE COMMITTEES OF THE COUNCIL

Following a change of Group by some Members of the Council, Council is required to agree a revision to the political balance of its Committees.

There are no other changes proposed to the current make up of committees.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) Those the Committees of the Council be appointed with:
 - (a) the membership sizes and
 - (b) the political balanceindicated in Appendix 2.

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Background Papers List

None

Annex 1

People Overview & Scrutiny Sub-Committee

The law requires that the Council co-opt to this Overview & Scrutiny Sub-Committee one representative of each of the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches, and three members representing governors of schools in the three sectors of education - primary, secondary and special. All co-opted Members have the same rights as elected Members, including the right to vote, may attend when issues relating to Education are being discussed and have the right to participate in such discussions.

It should be noted that this statutory requirement applies to any Overview & Scrutiny Committee that scrutinises education matters.

In addition, the Council's Constitution provides for three non-voting representatives of local teacher unions and professional associations to attend meetings of the Sub-Committee and participate in the discussion of matters relating to education.

POLITICAL BALANCE PRINCIPLES

The Council has a duty to make only such decisions as give effect, **so far as reasonably practicable**, to certain principles set out in the relevant legislation. The relevant principles are, in order of priority:

1. Not all of the seats on any Committee may be allocated to only one Group (note - the Cabinet is not a Committee).
2. The majority of seats on each Committee must be allocated to the Group having a majority of Members of the Council.
3. The total share of all the seats available for all Committees allocated to each political Group and to Members not in a Group must be proportionate to that Group's/Members' share of the total Council membership.
4. So far as can be done without conflicting with the other principles, the total number of seats on each Committee allocated to a political Group or to Members not in a Group must be proportionate to that Group's/those Members' share of total Council membership.

In practice, Committees are balanced against the overall total of Committee places and then, so far as that overall total allows, each Committee is balanced on its own. With the current distribution of seats on the Council, it is inevitable (a) Groups/Members will not all be able to be represented on every Committee and (b) that one Group's representation on some Committees will be at the expense of another's.

The minimum number of Councillors in a group for it to exist is two.

The Council may make arrangements different from those prescribed **provided that no Member of the Council votes against** those different arrangements.

To make such a decision each member of the Council must at least be sent an agenda indicating that the approval of alternative arrangements is to be considered. The agenda for this Council meeting meets this requirement. To accommodate this requirement this report should be treated as giving due notice so that there is no impediment to such a proposal being made.

Once the allocation of seats to Groups in accordance with the statutory procedure is undertaken, the Council is under a duty to make appointments to the Committee

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so as to give effect to the wishes expressed by that Group about who is to be appointed to their allocated seats.

The “wishes of the Group” may be communicated to the Proper Officer and will be implemented forthwith. Changes may be effected at any time by notice to the Proper Officer and will be notified to all Members in the next available edition of the weekly Calendar Brief.

It should be noted that the Constitution provides that the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Committees are appointed by Council and any change in membership affecting a Chairman or Vice-Chairman will therefore require consideration by Council.

RECOMMENDED SEAT ALLOCATION

Having regard to the principles of political balance and of seat allocation referred to in Appendix 1, the following allocation of seats is recommended on the basis that, taking all factors into account, it shows a “reasonably practicable” allocation of seats and is therefore the default position.

	CONS	HRA	LAB	EHRG	RAIG	
Governance	12	3	5	2	1	1
Licensing	6	2	3	1	0	0
Planning	6	2	3	1	0	0
Strat. Planning	6	2	3	1	0	0
Pensions	6	2	3	1	0	0
Audit	6	2	3	0	0	1
People OSSC	9	3	4	1	1	0
Places OSSC	9	3	4	1	1	0
O & S Board	12	3	5	2	1	1
Total seats allocated	72	22	33	10	4	3
Appointments S-C	5	2	2	1	0	0

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- Committee seats are allocated, and each Committee is balanced, as “reasonably practicably” as possible

PRINCIPLES FOR ALLOCATION OF SEATS ON COMMITTEES

The principles of seat allocation follow the requirements of the political balance principles, using a formula that takes account of the respective sizes of the Groups and the number of seats on Committees available for distribution among the Groups.

Basic allocation of seats

The seat entitlements of the Groups are agreed by a formula using the percentage of the membership of the Council represented by each Group (or Member(s) not in a Group), operating through a sequence of stages as follows:

First, the percentage of each Group's membership of the Council (and of any Members not within a Group) is calculated to two decimal places.

Next, that percentage is applied to the number of seats available on each Committee to agree each Group's potential entitlement to seats on that Committee. Where the resulting figure is not a whole number, generally it is rounded to the nearest whole number following the mathematical convention that numbers below .5 are rounded down, and those .5 or more are rounded up.

In some cases, a Group may be entitled to a seat even though, rounded down, its potential entitlement appears nil, as there is a specific number of seats available on each Committee and no other Group may have more seats on any Committee than its entitlement.

Once the size of the Groups are known, a table will be drawn up which will show the basic allocation on the basis of these principles to Committee sizes ranging from 3 Members to 15.

Finally, fine adjustment is required to ensure that, so far as reasonably practicable, the seats allocated reflect the overall proportion of Council membership held by each Group and the numerical strength of its entitlement to seats on particular Committees. For that purpose, at this stage the seat allocation of particular Committees will be adjusted from the ideally-balanced number reached in earlier stages of the process.

Specific allocations

For the allocation of seats on specific Committees, several permutations are possible. Although the Council's Constitution does specify particular numbers of seats to each Committee, it is expressed as being "or such other number as the Council may agree", so there is discretion as to Committee sizes.

Once the number of seats available on each Committee has been agreed, the allocation of seats to the individual Groups would then need to be adjusted between the Groups to achieve, so far as possible and practicable, an allocation that gives

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each Group its proportionate share of seats overall while ensuring that each Committee is proportionately balanced. In practice, it will be impossible to achieve both aims without enlarging Committee memberships to an unworkable size, so a degree of compromise is required.