



New Forest
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Annual Council Meeting Agenda

12 May 2025



SUMMONS

To All Members of the Council

You are hereby summoned to attend Annual Council meeting of the District Council to be held in Council Chamber - Appletree Court, Beaulieu Road, Lyndhurst, SO43 7PA on Monday, 12 May 2025, at 6.30 pm



Kate Ryan
Chief Executive

Appletree Court, Lyndhurst, Hampshire. SO43 7PA
www.newforest.gov.uk

This agenda can be viewed online (<https://democracy.newforest.gov.uk>). It can also be made available on audio tape, in Braille and large print.

Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting. The seating capacity of our Council Chamber public gallery is limited under fire regulations to 22.

Members of the public can watch this meeting live, or the subsequent recording, on the [Council's website](#). Live-streaming and recording of meetings is not a statutory requirement and whilst every endeavour will be made to broadcast our meetings, this cannot be guaranteed. Recordings remain available to view for a minimum of 12 months.

Anyone wishing to attend the meeting should contact the name and number shown below.

Enquiries to: Karen Wardle
Email: democratic@nfdc.gov.uk
Tel: 023 8028 5071

AGENDA

Apologies

1. MINUTES (Pages 7 - 20)

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 14 April 2025 as a correct record.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

To note any declarations of interests made by members in connection with an agenda item. The nature of the interests must also be specified.

Members are asked to discuss any possible interests with Democratic Services prior to the meeting.

3. VOTE OF THANKS TO THE OUTGOING CHAIRMAN

4. OUTGOING CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

The Chairman will address the Council, after which he and his consort will be presented with badges of their past offices.

5. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

To elect a Chairman of the Council to hold office until the Annual Meeting in 2026.

Cllr Sleep is the Council's nomination for the ensuing year.

6. ADDRESS BY THE CHAIRMAN OF COUNCIL

The newly-elected Chairman will address the Council.

7. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

To appoint a Vice-Chairman of the Council to hold office until the Annual Meeting in 2026.

Cllr Penny is the Council's nomination for the ensuing year.

8. AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION (Pages 21 - 34)

9. ALLOCATION OF SEATS AND APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES AND PANELS (Pages 35 - 42)

To agree the allocation of seats to the political groups on those Committees and Panels to which the political balance rules apply, and to approve the appointment of Members to Committees and Panels.

10. NOTICE OF MOTION

In accordance with Standing Order 21, Cllr Parker will move the following motion:-

This Council notes:

1. Democratic Accountability in Hampshire: *The current devolution process in Hampshire must prioritise democratic governance and accountability to ensure that decisions are made in the best interests of Hampshire residents.*

2. The high cost of standing: *The mayoral elections in England require a £5,000 deposit and a £5,000 contribution for inclusion in a candidate booklet, which deters capable individuals from running for office. While it is essential to discourage*

frivolous candidacies – the cost should be lowered and alternative mechanisms considered, such as requiring candidates to gather a specified number of signatures from electors.

3. Voting System Change: *Until 2023, mayoral elections in England were conducted under the Supplementary Vote system, which provided a fairer voting mechanism compared to the First Past the Post system now in use.*

This Council believes that:

1. Lowering financial barriers *would encourage greater participation and diversity among candidates, enhancing democracy.*

2. Reintroducing a fairer voting system, *using Supplementary Vote (or a similarly fairer voting system) would ensure a more representative and democratic outcome.*

This Council resolves to:

1. Call for the cost of standing for election to be lowered *by reducing deposit requirements and introducing alternative mechanisms, such as requiring a specified number of signatures from electors, to discourage frivolous candidacies.*

2. Support the reintroduction of a fairer voting system *such as the Supplementary Vote, for mayoral elections in England.*

3. Request formal support from:

- *The Leader of Hampshire County Council*
- *The Minister for Communities, Housing, and Local Government (MCHLG)*
- *The local MPs (“New Forest West” and “New Forest East” constituencies)*

Invite the Leader of the Council to write to the above recipients, unless the Leader does not support the motion, then instead invite the Chief Executive Officer. The letter to state the council's position regarding recommendations one and two (above) and seeking their support for these reforms.

4. Promote these reforms *during the devolution process in our interactions with Hampshire County Council, the Ministry for Communities, Housing and Local Government and other relevant stakeholders.*

Cllr Richards will second the motion.

Under the provisions of Standing Order 42, the above motion, after being proposed and seconded (without speeches), should stand referred to the body within whose terms of reference the subject matter of the motions comes, or the Cabinet or such Committees or Panels that the Council may determine.

The Chairman may allow the motion to be dealt with at this meeting if they consider it urgent, convenient or conducive to the despatch of business.

11. ATTENDANCE DISPENSATION UNDER SECTION 85 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Section 85 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972 states that “if a Member of a Local Authority fails, throughout a period of six consecutive months from the date of their last attendance, to attend any meeting of the Authority they will, unless the failure was due to some good reason approved by the Authority before the expiry of that

period, cease to be a member of the Authority.”

The Council is recommended to waive the legal requirement, set out above, in relation to Cllr Thierry, on the good reason of ill health grounds, to prevent him being automatically disqualified as a councillor for not attending council meetings for a period of six consecutive months from the date of his last attendance.

RECOMMENDED:

That, having regard to the current ill health of Cllr Thierry, and in accordance with Section 85 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972, the requirement for Cllr Thierry to attend any meeting of the authority, be waived until the Council's Annual Meeting on 18 May 2026.

For the avoidance of doubt, the next meeting that Cllr Thierry must attend to satisfy the requirements of the legislation, in the event that he is unable to attend a meeting prior, is the Council's Annual Meeting on 18 May 2026.

12. MEETING DATES

To note the following schedule of Council meetings for the remainder of the 2025/26 municipal year, all commencing at 6.30 pm:

- 14 July 2025
- 15 September 2025
- 13 October 2025
- 15 December 2025
- 23 February 2026
- 13 April 2026
- 18 May 2026 (Annual Meeting)

13. ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT

At the conclusion of the Annual Council Meeting, the Annual Meetings of the Council's Committees and Panels will be held.

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Agenda Item 1

14 APRIL 2025

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the New Forest District Council held on Monday, 14 April 2025

- * Cllr David Hawkins (Chairman)
- * Cllr John Sleep (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

- * John Adams
- * Alan Alvey
- * Peter Armstrong
- * Geoffrey Blunden
- * Hilary Brand
- * Mark Clark
- * Steve Clarke
- * Jill Cleary
- * Kate Crisell
- * Sean Cullen
- * Jack Davies
- * Steve Davies
- * Philip Dowd
- * Barry Dunning
- Jacqui England
- * Richard Frampton
- * Allan Glass
- * David Harrison
- * Matthew Hartmann
- * John Haywood
- * Jeremy Heron
- * Nigel Linford
- * Patrick Mballa

Councillors:

- * Colm McCarthy
- * David Millar
- * Ian Murray
- * Stephanie Osborne
- * Alan O'Sullivan
- Adam Parker
- * Dave Penny
- * Neville Penman
- * Dan Poole
- * Caroline Rackham
- * Alvin Reid
- * Joe Reilly
- * Janet Richards
- * Barry Rickman
- * Steve Rippon-Swaine
- Michael Thierry
- * Derek Tipp
- * Neil Tungate
- * Alex Wade
- * Malcolm Wade
- * Christine Ward
- Phil Woods
- * Richard Young

*Present

Officers Attending:

Alan Bethune, Lee Ellis, Richard Knott, Daniel Reynafarje, Karen Wardle and Matt Wisdom

Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs England, Parker, Thierry and Woods.

64 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meetings held on 24 February and 20 March 2025, be confirmed.

65 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of any disclosable pecuniary interests by Members.

66 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman reported on the following recent engagements:

Chairman's Civic Service

The Chairman was delighted to report that on 23 March, he had held his Civic Service at St Mary Magdalene Church, New Milton. This highlighted key elements of his time over the year as Chairman, and it was acknowledged that the 50th year of New Forest District Council was drawing to a close. The event had been attended by civic heads, the Chief Executive, the Leader and other councillors and the Chairman thanked all those who attended.

Opening of Hardley Depot

On 24 March, the Chairman attended the grand opening of Hardley Depot which provided larger and modernised facilities. The depot was a base for local services, including waste and recycling collections and street cleaning.

New Milton Community Celebration event

The Chairman attended an event in New Milton to celebrate members of the public and their support within the local community.

Milford on Sea Community Library

The Chairman attended a celebration event to mark the 10 year anniversary of the community library. He acknowledged the importance of libraries and the benefits they brought to the local community.

Civic Days

The Chairman had also attended a number of civic days, including that for the Mayor of Winchester and the Chairman of East Hants. The Vice-Chairman, Cllr John Sleep also attended the Civic Day for the Mayor of Havant and the Chairman of Hart.

Vice-Chairman attended event – Annual Duke of Edinburgh Award Evening

The Chairman thanked the Vice-Chairman, for attending the annual Duke of Edinburgh award presentation evening, where certificates were presented by Lieutenant Colonel D J Love, adventurer and mountaineer.

67 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**Waste Collection Service Roll out**

The Leader reported that an important milestone in the journey to improve recycling across the district had been met, as work had begun delivering wheeled bins and

food waste caddies to the 30,000 households in Phase 1 of the rollout. This was the first visible step towards the start of the new waste collection service in June, a service that had been a long time in the planning and was eagerly awaited by many of our residents.

Not only would the new service help increase recycling rates, it would also bring immediate environmental benefits, such as cutting down on the mess and hazards caused by animals tearing into sacks, by introducing the new weekly food waste recycling which would take the food waste out of the general waste.

The Leader acknowledged that any big change would take time to get used to. She recognised that it would be an adjustment for both residents and crews, who would be working to entirely new routes and schedules. A great deal of effort had been put into clear, helpful communication, from leaflets and letters to online information, to make sure residents know of the changes, when they would take place, and how to make the most of the new service.

Finally, she thanked residents for embracing this change, and the staff from the crews on the ground to those behind the scenes, for all their hard work in bringing this ambitious project to life.

Local Government Review Update

The Leader expressed her thanks to members of the Council as a whole for making it very clear what the council's position was on future local government reorganisation, and for supporting Cabinet to take the decision to submit the interim response to Government. Feedback was awaited, but in the meantime hard work was taking place to build alliances to support the preferred outcome, and also to defend the District from any boundary changes that were felt to be not necessary or justified.

68 FINANCIAL REGULATIONS REVIEW

Cllr Alvey introduced the report and moved the recommendations. Cllr Adams seconded the motion.

RESOLVED:

1. That the updated Financial Regulations, as set out in the report and in appendices 1-3, be approved; and
2. That the consequential changes to align the Contract Standing Orders (CSO) thresholds as set out in appendix 4 be approved.

69 REPORT OF CABINET - 21 MARCH 2025

There were no speakers on the item considered by Cabinet on 21 March 2025.

70 REPORT OF CABINET - 2 APRIL 2025**PART I – ITEMS RESOLVED BY CABINET**

There were no speakers on the items resolved by Cabinet at its meeting on 2 April 2025.

PART II – RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL**Item 6 – People Strategy**

Cllr Cleary introduced the item and moved the recommendation from the Cabinet meeting held on 2 April 2025. Cllr S Davies seconded the motion.

A few members recognised that with the prospect of Local Government Review (LGR) that it was an uncertain and challenging time for members of staff. The importance of staff was highlighted, and it was felt that support needed to be in place to manage any insecurities and to provide development opportunities for all staff for the future in an uncertain time.

Cllr Cleary acknowledged and supported the concerns raised.

RESOLVED:

That the People Strategy be adopted.

Item 7 – Digital Strategy 2025-2028

Cllr Heron introduced the report and moved the recommendation. Cllr S Davies seconded the motion.

A member spoke in support of the strategy but raised concern about members of the public who could not, or would not engage by digital means. This view was supported by other members who spoke about the District having an ageing population and that people should be supported by offering alternative ways to contact and engage with the council. It was highlighted by one member that councillors had a role to play in the community, as that there were various organisations, such as the mens shed, for example, which got people together and this could be used as an opportunity to educate people, recognising that digital skills were important for everyone. It was suggested that this could be done through the provision of a member grant, or through members attending meetings and that this would help the health and wellbeing of the community.

One Member expressed their thanks to the changes which had been made to the Digital Strategy following the discussion at the Resources and Transformation Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

Cllr Heron responded, acknowledging the points raised and reported that the council would continue to be accessible to residents through the information offices which provide face to face contact, as well as on the telephone, as alternatives to online digital services for as long current administration remained in place.

RESOLVED:

That the Digital Strategy 2025-2028 be adopted.

Item 8 – Corporate Peer Challenge report and action plan**Part I – Recommendations resolved by Cabinet**

One Member spoke in support of the Corporate Peer Challenge report and felt that all the recommendations should be implemented.

Part II – Recommendation to Council

Cllr Cleary, introduced the report and recommendation for Council approval, relating to the motion which had been considered by the Resources and Transformation Overview and Scrutiny Panel and by Cabinet. Cllr S Davies seconded the motion.

Cllr Rackham proposed an amendment to recommendation 4. This had been published with the agenda prior to the meeting and is detailed as follows:

That the process for selecting the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Overview and Scrutiny Panels only, be amended to support the principle that these six positions are allocated to the political groups on the Council, in proportion to their overall membership of the Council. At present, this would mean an allocation of:-

Conservative Group – 3 positions

Liberal Democrat Group – 2 positions

Independent Group – 1 position

If the Council supports this principle, draft amendments to the Council's Standing Orders for Meetings would be made to establish a procedure, for consideration at the Council's Annual Meeting in May 2025.

Cllr Rackham spoke in support of the amendment, highlighting the purpose of scrutiny, to act as a critical friend and the importance of this in the democratic process. It would enable more sound consideration of scrutiny topics. The peer review had suggested that scrutiny meetings could be chaired by the opposition. The amendment did not propose to alter the political composition of the panels. There was nothing to fear and everything to gain in terms of more equal discussion. Finally, the suggested approach was practiced in some other authorities.

Cllr M Wade seconded the amendment.

A member spoke in opposition to the amendment expressing the view that it was less democratic, as it limited who you could vote for to be chairman and vice-chairman.

A number of members spoke in support of the amendment. It was suggested that the best person to be chairman of the panels was not necessarily from the leading party and that other members were capable of chairing meetings. There was merit in an alternative view being expressed by the opposition and that it would allow greater debate, more challenge and that opposition chairman would enable greater involvement of members and improve working between all parties. A member spoke about scrutiny not being about following party political lines.

It was acknowledged that the peer review report had suggested that the panel meetings could be chaired by an opposition member as a means to strengthen scrutiny. The motion from Cllr Rackham had been discussed by the Resources and Transformation Overview and Scrutiny Panel and that a motion to support the peer challenge recommendation on scrutiny being chaired by opposition members was narrowly defeated by one vote. A member responded to this, acknowledging that there had been a detailed debate at the panel meeting, and the voting demonstrated that the debate had been fairly equal and that the matter had been fully scrutinised.

A member spoke in opposition to the amendment, highlighting that the constitution allowed for any member of the panel to be elected as chairman and vice-chairman and that the proposal would divide up the panels along party political lines.

A member highlighted that the proposed amendment followed the approach taken in the House of Commons, whereby the role of chairman of select committees was shared across the political groups.

Cllr Rackham, in her summing up clarified that the amendment presented at the meeting was not her original motion. The proposal would enable more challenge and examination for the benefit of local residents. The amendment had been put forward, in light of the recommendation contained within the peer review report.

Cllr Cleary responded to the debate reporting that the scrutiny panels allowed for all members to be involved, and that challenge by the opposition was not feared. She felt that close working had been taking place with opposition members and that whilst the peer review had recommended there be consideration of opposition chairman, it was not something she was supportive of.

Put to the vote, the amendment was lost.

RESOLVED:

That Council, having considered the views of the Resources and Transformation Overview and Scrutiny Panel and Cabinet, with regard to the motion that the process for selecting Chairmen and Vice-Chairman of Committees and Panels, agree that the process should remain unchanged.

Item 9 – Principal Risk and Risk Management Policy update

Cllr Cleary introduced the report and moved the recommendations. Cllr S Davies seconded the motion.

One Member raised an issue which had previously been raised at the Cabinet meeting in relation to page 10 of the Risk Management Policy, and the morale section where it was felt that the first box should be fuller in content.

Cllr Cleary responded to this and clarified that this point had been taken on board.

RESOLVED:

That the Principal Risk Register and revised Risk Management Policy be adopted.

71 NOMINATIONS TO THE OFFICES OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN

The Chairman invited Members to propose and second the nominations for the offices of Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council received in accordance with the Council's Constitution.

Cllr Hawkins moved that Cllr Sleep be the Council's nomination for the office of Chairman of the Council for 2025/26. Cllr Poole seconded the motion.

Cllr M Wade moved that Cllr M Clark be the Council's nomination for the office of Chairman of the Council for 2025/26. Cllr J Davies seconded the motion.

Members debated the nominations.

Put to a secret ballot, Cllr Sleep received the majority of votes.

Cllr Sleep moved that Cllr Penny be the Council's nomination for the office of Vice-Chairman of the Council for 2025/26. Cllr Poole seconded the motion.

Cllr Miller moved that Cllr A Wade be the Council's nomination for the office of Vice-Chairman of the Council for 2025/26. Cllr Cullen seconded the motion.

Members debated the nominations.

Put to a secret ballot, Cllr Penny received the majority of votes.

RESOLVED:

That the Council's Nominations for the Offices of Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council for 2025/26, be as follows:-

Chairman – Cllr Sleep

Vice-Chairman – Cllr Penny

72 QUESTIONS

Questions were put and answered under Standing Order 22, as follows:-

- From Cllr Rackham to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability, Cllr Blunden, on the use of profit from the car parks to fund other transport services.
- From Cllr A Wade to the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness, Cllr S Davies, regarding the Landlord Forum and challenges to find suitable private sector housing.
- From Cllr J Davies, to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Cleary, on LGR and timescale for notification of the geographical boundaries of the new unitary authorities.

- From Cllr M Clark, to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Cleary, on the District Councils contribution towards consultants with regard to LGR discussions.
- From Cllr Brand to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Cleary, on the assessment of any reorganisation and access to services for local residents.
- From Cllr McCarthy to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Cleary, on officers and councillors involved in dual discussions with other authorities and conflict of interest.
- From Cllr Mballa to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Cleary on contingency plans and the alignment of the reorganisation plan being developed at county level.
- From Cllr Harrison to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Cleary, on the publication of all correspondence with DLUHC and other authorities.

Note: A copy of the full questions and replies are attached to these minutes.

73 APPOINTMENT OF MONITORING OFFICER

RESOLVED:

1. That Matt Wisdom (currently Service Manager – Democratic and Support Services) be appointed as Monitoring Officer (under a new role: Assistant Director – Strategy & Engagement), with the Monitoring Officer function taking effect from the departure date of the current Monitoring Officer, Tanya Coulter;
2. That the consequential amendments be made throughout the Council's Constitution; and
3. That Council notes the decision of the Chief Executive (as the Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer) to appoint the Strategic Director, Corporate Resource & Transformation to undertake the roles of Deputy Returning Officer and Deputy Electoral Registration Officer.

74 MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND PANELS

There were no changes.

CHAIRMAN

Council – 14 April 2025 – Questions Under Standing Order 22

First Questions

Question 1

From Cllr Caroline Rackham to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability, Cllr Geoffrey Blunden

It is clear that HCC will not contribute to a decent public transport system for our residents. We have a broken ferry service, still no buses direct to the General Hospital and residents across the Forest completely limited in where they can work by a lack of buses. Can the Portfolio Holder tell me exactly why profit from the car parks – which is over a £1 million a year – cannot be used to fund a community health bus, a Calshot bus service and to relaunch the Hythe Ferry?

Reply:

The money generated by the Councils car parks is already accounted for, both covering their operational costs as well as supporting the delivery of a raft of other Council services and operations as part of our balanced budget. I can't help but wonder which of the current services offered by this Council, and so valued by our residents, the Councillor would propose we stop funding or delivering to meet her request? Perhaps it's quite timely that the next question on this agenda item is focused around homelessness, and the recognition of rising costs here; this just one area of many that the Council supports through its balanced budget.

Note: In response to a supplementary question regarding whether any funding could be used from other sources, such as CIL for community transport, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that there was a procedure to be followed for the allocation of CIL funding with an application process and a review of bids received being considered at a member Task and Finish Group. CIL funding had a clear defined use for what it can be used for.

Question 2

From Cllr Alex Wade to the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness, Cllr Steve Davies

With Housing and Homelessness cases being an issue that all Ward Cllrs will be dealing with, and the challenges with Housing Families in the Private Sector, due to rising costs among other factors, what can he share

with Cllrs from the recent Landlords forum that could reassure those Families in finding a suitable home which our Housing Officers are supporting, and reduce those having to use emergency accommodation?

Reply:

Thank you for your question. The private rented sector landlords provide a valued and essential supply of homes across the district. Whilst homelessness wasn't discussed at the last forum, at the forum information is shared with landlords to reassurance and support them on areas of shared interest.

A Homelessness Prevention Officer is employed by the council, whose role is dedicated to identifying properties, agents and landlords in the private rented sector; liaising with them to build a good working relationship to ensure a good supply of properties to prevent homelessness.

A Homelessness Prevention Support Worker Officer is also employed to liaise with the individual at risk or the landlords to provide a degree of assurance there, to offer sustainable support for anyone at risk of being homeless.

We also have emergency temporary accommodation which we try to avoid, using it for emergency use only. There were temporary accommodation sites, in the District, thought to be 196 in total. 57 units had been created since 2018. These were a holding place for those who had been made homeless. More units were becoming available with 17 more this year, of which 6 were in New Milton, 8 Totton (Salisbury Road), and 3 elsewhere in the district.

It was anticipated that 10-12 more homes would be available in Ringwood and Fordingbridge shortly. It was important to try to avoid any emergency accommodation need by ensuring that more accommodation is available.

Note: In response to a supplementary question about reducing the number of people on the housing waiting list, particularly in the light of LGR and whether more should be done to provide additional temporary accommodation, the Portfolio Holder recognised that it was a challenging situation with no simple answer, but acknowledged that more could be done. He felt that the duty at the current time was to consider ways to support local residents. Around 49% of prevention funding was spent on homelessness, which was a general fund expense. The provision of additional temporary accommodation would reduce these costs.

Question 3

From Cllr Jack Davies to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Jill Cleary

Following this Council's support for the joint submission to government, when will Councillors be told the geographical boundaries of the new unitary authorities?

Reply:

The government's timetable for local government reorganisation is not fixed beyond the deadline of final proposals to be submitted in September 2025.

I believe that the priority ahead remains to protect the distinct identity of the New Forest by looking to form a rural unitary council with mid-Hampshire, preserving the whole of the New Forest District.

Having only recently secured all of the necessary data, KPMG consultants are now modelling a set of options that will be discussed by the leaders of the 15 councils in early May and I will update all Members when I am able to, as I have done throughout this process.

Note: In response to a supplementary question regarding any Government organisation plan which included the New Forest District merging with Southampton, either in full or in part and whether the Leader would formally oppose this and take legal steps to challenge it, the Leader would have to consider if there was any appropriate recourse to challenge any government decision, in the event that an outcome was forced on the Council that was not supported by the community. She would however, work as hard as she could to keep the District as one whole unit and that it was her top priority.

Question 4

From Cllr Mark Clark to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Jill Cleary

In regards to LGR discussions, how much is the contribution that this authority is making towards consultants either jointly with others or severally to achieve its' aims of keeping the New Forest together?

Reply:

This Council made a decision to allocate £150,000 into a specific Devolution and LGR reserve. Some of this funding will be needed to contribute towards the jointly commissioned work with KPMG, and we may decide to spend some of this funding on our own commissioned work with consultants. As of yet, neither of these values are confirmed. I have vowed to keep all Councillors informed of our plans and intentions, and this will include the sums committed to spend, when committed to.

Note: In response to a supplementary question about whether the appointment of consultants had gone through procurement processes considering value for money or competitive tendering, the Leader reported that due to the technical nature of the question she would provide a response outside of the meeting.

Question 5

From Cllr Hilary Brand to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Jill Cleary

The Conservative HCC Administration in Winchester chose to fast track the LGR process pulling in Districts such as our own to the momentum. Pausing for a moment, what assessment has this Council made of how reorganisation might affect local access to services, especially for rural and elderly residents?

Reply:

I would not want to comment on the County Council's apparent enthusiasm for devolution and local government reorganisation. What I do know is clear is that reorganisation alone will not produce the scale of savings that are required to provide financially sustainable services over the medium term.

We strongly believe that the right model for new services delivering adult and children's services is one that is designed around our deep understanding of place. This, alongside our statutory and community based preventative work with local partners will ensure that resources can be allocated more efficiently and meets the needs of our communities.

Question 6

From Cllr Colm McCarthy to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Jill Cleary

We have a number of double hatters or even triple here in this chamber. Are any Officers or Councillors on this Council involved in dual discussions with other authorities that may create conflicts of interest in shaping our position?

Reply:

Currently I am leading on the discussions with the other leaders. As the process develops there will be a need for more input from other members across the council and there will be particular points at which decisions will need to be made. All councillors involved in the debates and decisions from all parties will have to be aware of any conflicts of interest they may have, for example those sitting on the District Council and the County Council will need to decide what approach they are going to take to the decisions within each council.

Officers of the council will be acting further to the direction agreed by members, and I cannot see a position arising where an officer would have a conflict of interest. Officers are aware of their need to consider conflicts generally in the work that they do for the Council.

Question 7

From Cllr Patrick Mballa to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Jill Cleary

What contingency plans exist if the political leadership of this Council is clearly not aligned with the reorganisation plan being developed at county level?

Reply:

At present the council is working in line with the agreed principles which includes modelling a range of different options. As has been made clear it is unlikely that we will all as 15 councils settle on one option.

With council support we are working to deliver a rural-focused unitary authority as the best option for the New Forest area, and one that does not see the district divided. If this is not supported as a model by other councils, we will then consider whether to make our own representations.

Question 8

From Cllr David Harrison to the Leader of the Council, Cllr Jill Cleary

We have only seen vague expressions of intent by the leadership on our website. Wouldn't it be useful for public debate by publishing further information? Will the Council therefore commit to publishing all correspondence with DLUHC or other authorities on this matter in the interests of transparency?

Reply:

I agree that transparency in the process is very important. Initial correspondence with council leaders from MHCLG has been in the public domain and linked to on our website and in the background papers of our decision making report in March.

Data sharing and access to information as local government reorganisation progresses, is something that is being taken up collectively by the leaders and chief executives across Hampshire and the Solent, so that we have a consistent approach across all councils. This will involve the publication of information pro-actively where appropriate, and the protocol for how councils respond to any requests for specific information.

Note: In response to a supplementary question about the unwanted possibility of District Council merging with Southampton and the level of confidence the Leader had to be able to stop it, the Leader reported that she would actively talk with other Leaders as well as Chief Executives to give it her best effort. She was passionate about the forest, recognising it was a unique place and that it should be protected.

Council – 12 May 2025

Amendments to the Constitution

Purpose	For Decision
Classification	Public
Executive Summary	This report outlines amendments to the Council’s Constitution to ensure it is consistent with the reviewed financial regulations; to provide explicitly for electronic signing and sealing of documents and to update the officer’s scheme of delegation to be consistent with the revised officer structure.
Recommendation	That Council approves the amendments to the Constitution as set out in the report and attached appendices.
Reasons for recommendation	To ensure the Constitution is updated to reflect revised staffing structures and financial regulations.
Wards	All
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Jill Cleary – Leader
Strategic Director	Alan Bethune – Corporate Resources and Transformation
Officer Contact	Tanya Coulter Assistant Director - Governance 02380 285532 tanya.coulter@nfdc.gov.uk

Introduction and background

1. The Monitoring Officer is responsible for ensuring the Council’s Constitution is reviewed regularly so that it is kept up to date.
2. A review has been undertaken by the Monitoring Officer and Democratic Services and there are several amendments that are proposed to ensure consistency with the financial regulations that have recently been approved by Council and with changes to the

staffing structure so that it is absolutely clear which officer is able to make a specific decision.

Proposed Amendments

3. The proposed amendments are summarised as follows:
 - a. Amendment to the officer's scheme of delegation to primarily make it clear that a Senior Manager is able to make decisions in respect of all areas as set out in their Service Plan, as at 2(b) of the revised scheme at Appendix 1.
 - b. Amendment to section 13 of the Council's Standing Orders for General Procedures, relating to the sealing and signing of documents. The amendment makes it absolutely clear that documents can be signed and sealed by electronic means. Although it may not be necessary to spell this out, it is considered helpful to make this absolutely clear to avoid any doubt.
 - c. Amendments to section 1 of the Council's Executive Decision Making (Responsibility for Functions, Cabinet) to clarify that a decision is within the budget framework, unless the financial regulations provide for it being a Full Council decision. In addition, the inclusion of the key decision definition in this section, to provide alignment with recent changes to the financial regulations.

Corporate plan priorities

4. This supports the priority of being an efficient council and it provides clarity in respect of decision making.

Options appraisal

5. The changes provide clarity and consistency. The alternative option is not to make the changes which would then mean the Constitution is not updated and could arguably be inconsistent with other provisions and lack clarity in certain aspects. This would make for more time-consuming decision making.

Consultation undertaken

6. Consultation has been undertaken with Executive Management Team, Leadership Team and Group Leaders. They have supported the proposed changes.

Financial and resource implications

7. There are no financial or resource implications arising from this report.

Legal implications

8. The proposed changes ensure additional clarity and consistency in decision making which provides added assurance of the legality and transparency of decision making by the Council.

Risk assessment

9. No formal risk assessment is required. There are risk associated with not making the changes as highlighted above in the body of the report.

Environmental / Climate and nature implications

10. None identified.

Equalities implications

11. None identified.

Crime and disorder implications

12. None identified.

Data protection / Information governance / ICT implications

13. None identified.

New Forest National Park / Cranborne Chase National Landscape implications

14. None identified.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Delegation of Powers to Officers
Appendix 2 – Extract from Standing Orders for General Procedures
Appendix 3 – Executive Decision Making

Background Papers:

None.

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DELEGATION OF POWERS TO OFFICERS

General

1. Notwithstanding any specific Delegation of Powers to Officers resolved by the Council, a Committee or the Executive, Officers have the authority to make all day to day and operational decisions, (including taking any actions or decisions pursuant to any statutory powers), on Executive, Non-Executive and Regulatory functions that fall within their scope of responsibility.

As this places a broad functional responsibility, this Delegation to Officers should be taken to assume powers, and duties, within all present and future legislation, and all powers incidental to that legislation.

2. It is deemed that the power to take decisions falls within the scope of an Officer's responsibility in any of following instances:-
 - a) They have been specifically authorised by Council, the Leader, Cabinet, a Committee or Sub-Committee to make a decision.
 - b) As a Senior Officer, they are responsible and accountable for producing and maintaining a Service Plan and the decision relates to a function or responsibility for a service identified within that plan.
 - c) They are carrying out statutory duties pursuant to being a statutory postholder.
 - d) It is a function or responsibility within the Officer's job description.

Limitations

3. Officers may only exercise delegated powers in accordance with:-
 - (a) The Standing Orders and Financial Regulations of the Council; and
 - (b) Approved policies, plans, strategies, schemes or directions, where they exist; of the Council, Cabinet or any Committee.

Sub-Delegation

4. Administrative functions ancillary to the exercise of delegated powers are deemed to be authorised to be carried out by any officer within the remit of the relevant service area.

Further Provisions

5. It shall always be open to an Officer not to exercise their delegated powers but to refer the matter to the Council, Cabinet, or relevant Committee (as appropriate) for decision.
6. For the avoidance of doubt, where the Council, Cabinet or a Committee has settled a policy, plan or budget for a matter, each Strategic Director, Assistant Director, Service Manager (or others that they shall direct), shall be empowered to deal with all such matters that are necessary to bring the policy, plan or budget into effect.

Delegation in the case of absence or inability to act

7. If any officer having delegated authority under the Scheme is absent or otherwise unable to exercise their delegation, the Chief Executive, or a Strategic Director, are hereby authorised to make such decisions and initiate such actions as they deem necessary in the interests of the Council's functions and services.

Specific Provisions and Statutory Postholders

8. The Following specific designations shall apply:-
 - (a) **Head of Paid Service** – Chief Executive
 - (b) **Monitoring Officer** – Assistant Director – Governance
 - (c) **Section 151 Officer** – Strategic Director – Corporate Resources and Transformation
 - (d) **Returning Officer** – Chief Executive
 - (e) **Electoral Registration Officer** – Chief Executive

13. Sealing of Documents

- 13.1 The Common Seal of the Council shall be fixed to a document when the affixing of the Seal is required following a decision by the Council, Cabinet (including a decision made on its behalf under delegated powers), a Committee, Panel or Sub-Committee, or a decision by an officer under delegated powers, which authorises the action set out in that document. For the avoidance of doubt, the affixing of the Seal may be undertaken electronically.
- 13.2 The Chief Executive, Strategic Directors, Assistant Directors, Service Managers (and such other officers as they authorise), may attest the seal.
- 13.3 Every sealing shall be recorded, consecutively numbered, in a register kept for the purpose, which shall record the name of the officer attesting the seal.

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EXECUTIVE DECISION MAKING

1. GENERAL CONDITIONS

- 1.1 The Leader and any Portfolio Holder may make a decision only if all the following conditions are satisfied:
- a) The actions prior to reaching a decision set out in this document have been complied with (including those actions that apply if a decision needs to be made urgently).
 - b) The decision is wholly in accordance with the Council's approved budget and policy framework. For these purposes, a decision shall be regarded as being within the approved budget if it is a decision that does not require approval of Full Council in the financial regulations.
 - c) If, in the opinion of the Monitoring Officer, the matter significantly affects one other Portfolio, the relevant Portfolio Holder has been consulted and agrees in writing with the decision.
 - d) In the opinion of the Monitoring Officer, the decision does not significantly affect more than one other Portfolio. If it does, the full Cabinet must take the decision.
 - e) The decision is not reserved for the Cabinet by legislation or statutory guidance.
 - f) The Monitoring Officer and the appropriate professional advising officer consider that it is prudent for the Portfolio Holder to decide the matter under his delegated authority.
- 1.2 So long as the above conditions are complied with, individual Portfolio Holders are hereby authorised to take executive decisions, and to provide political vision and leadership, on each of the service areas contained within their Portfolio as set out in the Leader's Scheme of Delegation.
- 1.3 A key decision as defined by The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, is as follows:-
- (a) to result in the relevant local authority incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the relevant local authority's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates; or
 - (b) to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards or electoral divisions in the area of the relevant local authority.
- 1.4 For the purposes of (a) above, "significant" is defined by the Council as being a financial decision which requires a Cabinet decision in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations.

2. ACTION PRIOR TO REACHING A DECISION - CABINET

- 2.1 The provisions of Standing Orders for Meetings relating to convening meetings and issue of documentation shall apply to all meetings of the Cabinet.

3. ACTION PRIOR TO REACHING A DECISION – PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

- 3.1 In all cases, prior to taking any decision on any matter, the Portfolio Holder shall be responsible for:-
- (a) ensuring that the decision to be made is within their delegated-powers;
 - (b) obtaining, in writing (which may be transmitted electronically) a summary of the issues from the Service Manager responsible for the matter under consideration;
 - (c) obtaining confirmation that any course of action proposed is within the Council's legal powers and complies with the Council's strategies, policies and budgets;
 - (d) determining whether the proposed action has any effect on the responsibilities of other Portfolio Holders;
 - (e) ensuring that where the matter affects a specific part of the District Council's area, the views of the relevant Ward Members, and where appropriate, the local Parish or Town Council's views have been obtained and taken into account in reaching a decision; and
 - (f) if the decision is a key decision:
 - i) ensuring that details of the subject of the decision are contained in the relevant forward plan for consideration at that time, and if they are not that the relevant provisions for urgent decisions of this Constitution are followed;
 - ii) ensuring that any report or other written information that they intend to take into consideration when they make the decision was available for public inspection as soon as reasonably practicable after they received it, and has been so available for at least five clear working days before the decision is made; and
 - iii) ensuring that any report or other written information that they intend to take into consideration when they make the decision has been forwarded to the Chairman of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel.
- 3.2 Where any matter considered by a Portfolio Holder is outside their delegated powers, the matter shall stand referred to the Leader for consideration whether to determine it themselves or whether to refer it to the Cabinet. No action that commits the Council shall be taken on that matter until after the issue has been determined by the Leader or Cabinet.
- 3.3 Where any matter considered by a Portfolio Holder is outside the legal powers of the Council or contrary to the Council's strategies, policies or budgets, no action that commits the Council shall be taken on that matter until after the issue has been determined by the Cabinet.
EXCEPT that where a decision which does not comply with the Council's strategies or policies, or would not be wholly in accordance with the budget, or is a key decision which a forward plan does not specify is for decision at that time, is required urgently, that matter may be determined in accordance with the urgency provisions of this Constitution.
- 3.4 Where a decision would have an effect on the responsibilities of another Portfolio Holder or has implications which might affect the corporate strategies of the Council, the Portfolio Holder shall consult with any other Portfolio Holder and the Leader prior to reaching any decision.

4. ACTION PRIOR TO REACHING A KEY DECISION – OFFICERS

4.1 In all cases, prior to taking a key decision on any matter, the Officer shall be responsible for:-

- (a) ensuring that the decision to be made is within their delegated powers;
- (b) obtaining confirmation that any course of action proposed is within the Council's legal powers and complies with the Council's strategies, policies and budgets;
- (c) ensuring that details of the subject of the decision are contained in the relevant forward plan for consideration at that time, and if they are not that the relevant urgency provisions of this Constitution are followed;
- (d) ensuring that any report that they intend to take into consideration when they make the decision was available for public inspection as soon as reasonably practicable after they received it, and has been so available for at least five clear working days before the decision is made;
- (e) ensuring that any report that they intend to take into consideration when they make the decision has been forwarded to the Chairman of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel; and
- (f) ensuring that where the matter affects a specific part of the District Council's area, the views of the relevant Ward Members, and where appropriate, the local Parish or Town Council's views have been obtained and taken into account in reaching a decision.

5. ACTION AT POINT OF DECISION MAKING – PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

5.1 In reaching a decision on any matter referred to them the Portfolio Holder shall:-

- (a) take into consideration the views expressed by the Service Manager responsible for the matter under consideration;
- (b) where appropriate, take account of the views of other Portfolio Holders, the Leader, the Ward Members and the local Parish or Town Council;
- (c) endorse the written documentation prepared by the appropriate Service Manager with their decision and where that decision is contrary to the Officer's recommendation or views submitted by the Ward Member or local Town or Parish Council, the reasons for reaching the different conclusion; and
- (d) endorse all written documentation giving options considered with the reasons why particular options were rejected.

6. ACTION AFTER DECISION - CABINET

6.1 As soon as reasonably practicable after a meeting, the Chief Executive or Monitoring Officer shall ensure that a written statement that includes the information set out below is produced in respect of every decision made at that meeting:

- (a) a record of the decision;
- (b) a record of the reasons for the decision;
- (c) details of any alternative options considered and rejected by the Cabinet at the meeting;
- (d) a record of any conflict of interest in relation to the matter decided which is declared by any member of the Cabinet; and

- (e) in respect of any declared conflict of interest, a note of any dispensation granted.

6.2 The Chief Executive or Monitoring Officer shall also:-

- (a) maintain copies, which may be held electronically, of all the reports and supporting papers taken into account by the Cabinet in making a decision;
- (b) make the notice prepared under 6.1, the reports and supporting papers (including a list of background papers) available for inspection at the Council's main office by any Member of the Council during normal office hours; and
- (c) make the notice, reports and supporting papers (including a list of background papers), except for those which contain confidential or exempt information as defined by the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), available for public inspection at the Council's main office during normal office hours, and on the Council's website. No charge shall be made for inspection of such papers.

7. ACTION AFTER DECISION – PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

7.1 On reaching a decision the Portfolio Holder shall:-

- (a) give instructions to the appropriate Service Manager to take the necessary action to implement the decision;
- (b) personally, or arrange for the proper officer to, notify Members of the decision taken;
- (c) ensure that the decision is not implemented until such time as the period for, and the conditions of, the procedures for calling in executive decisions have been complied with;
and;
- (d) supply a copy of all papers (which may be transmitted electronically) considered by them to the Chief Executive – together with a copy of the decision with reasons.

7.2 Upon notification of a decision, the Head of Service will:-

- (a) subject to compliance with the procedure for calling in executive decisions in, ensure implementation within any specified time scales and, if none given, within a reasonable period;
- (b) ensure that a copy of the decision and appropriate supporting papers are placed on the relevant file;
- (c) where instructed by the Portfolio Holder to arrange for a report on the decision taken to be circulated to all Members of the Council.
- (d) immediately notify Parish & Town Councils, together with any other persons or organisations, consulted about the proposals, of the decision taken.

7.3 As soon as reasonably practicable after a decision is taken the Chief Executive or Monitoring Officer shall ensure that a written statement that includes the information set out below is produced in respect of that decision:-

- (a) a record of the decision
- (b) a record of the reasons for the decision;
- (c) details of any alternative options considered and rejected at the time by the Portfolio Holder when he made the decision;

- (d) a record of any conflict of interest in relation to the matter decided which was declared by any Cabinet member who the Portfolio Holder making the decision consulted; and
- (e) in respect of any declared conflict of interest, a note of any dispensation granted.

7.4 The Chief Executive or Monitoring Officer shall also:-

- (a) maintain a register or registers, which may be held in electronic form, of decisions taken by Portfolio Holders under delegated powers;
- (b) maintain copies, which may be held electronically, of all the reports and supporting papers provided by the Portfolio Holder;
- (c) make the notice under 7.3, the register, reports and supporting papers (including a list of background papers) available for inspection at the Council's main office by any Member of the Council during normal office hours; and;
- (d) make the notice, register, reports and supporting papers (including a list of background papers), except for those which contain confidential or exempt information as defined by the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), available for public inspection at the Councils main office during normal office hours, and on the Council's website. No charge shall be made for inspection of such papers.

8. ACTION AFTER KEY DECISION – OFFICERS

8.1 As soon as reasonably practicable after an officer has made an Executive decision, or a non-executive decision where the following action is required by the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations, they shall produce a written statement that includes the information set out below:-

- (a) a record of the decision;
- (b) a record of the reasons for the decision;
- (c) details of any alternative options considered and rejected by them at the time they made the decision;
- (d) a record of any conflict of interest in relation to the matter decided which was declared by any member.

8.2 The Chief Executive or Monitoring Officer shall:-

- (a) maintain a register or registers, which may be held in electronic form, of the above decisions taken by officers under delegated powers;
- (b) maintain copies, which may be held electronically, of all the reports and supporting papers taken into account by an officer in making a key decision;
- (c) make the notice under 8.1, the register, reports and supporting papers (including a list of background papers) available for inspection at the Council's main office by any Member of the Council during normal office hours; and
- (d) make the notice, register, reports and supporting papers (including a list of background papers), except for those which contain confidential or exempt information as defined by the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), available for public inspection at the Council's main office during normal office hours, and on the Council's website. No charge shall be made for inspection of such papers.

9. KEY DECISIONS – OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANELS

9.1 If a decision is taken that was not treated as a key decision, but the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel considers that it should have been treated as a key decision, the Panel may require the Leader, or the person responsible for the decision, within a reasonable period specified by the Panel, to submit a report to the Council setting out:-

- (a) the decision and reasons for it;
- (b) the body or individual who took the decision; and
- (c) why it was not considered a key decision.

This is in addition to any other rights of Overview and Scrutiny Panels in relation to executive decisions contained elsewhere in this Constitution.

10. URGENT DECISIONS

10.1 Where in the opinion of the Leader, or Head of Service and Monitoring Officer, a decision is required urgently on any matter, whether by the Cabinet or delegated to a Portfolio Holder, the requirements :-

- (a) relating to the information, and (in the case of Portfolio Holder decisions) decision being in writing or electronic form;
- (b) relating to consultations with Ward Members and where appropriate the local Parish or Town Council;

shall apply only if there is sufficient time to follow these procedures without prejudicing the decision or the Council; provided that as soon as practicable after the matter has been determined, a written record of the issues and the action taken shall be made and circulated in accordance with the remaining provisions of this procedure; and

- (c) the provisions for Call-In in this constitution, so far as they relate to the date on which the decision may be implemented, shall not apply, and the decision may be implemented immediately.

10.2 Where a Portfolio Holder makes a decision urgently and is unable to endorse any written documentation at the time of making the decision as required in paragraph 5.1 above, he shall instead endorse, as soon as reasonably practicable, the written statement prepared under paragraph 7.3 above.

10.3 Where a decision which is not within policy or budget, or is a key decision which a forward plan does not specify is for decision at that time, is required, the provisions of the procedure at Chapter 7 of this Constitution shall apply.

11. VARIATION OF PROCEDURE

11.1 This procedure may be varied at any time by the Leader by giving written notice to the Chief Executive, provided any variations comply with legislative requirements.

Council – 12 May 2025

Allocation of seats and appointments to committees and panels

Purpose	For Decision
Classification	Public
Executive Summary	<p>In accordance with Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, it is necessary to review the representation of political groups on committees, when the authority holds its Annual Meeting. For this purpose, “committees” includes the Council’s Overview and Scrutiny Panels but excludes the Cabinet.</p> <p>Having regard to the current number of Members on the Council returning to 48, and applying the necessary principles of proportionality in order, it is recommended that no changes are made to the current allocation of seats.</p>
Recommendations	<p>That the Council:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. considers the allocation of seats to committees and panels in accordance with the principles set out in the report, and in doing so, agrees to the allocation set out in the table in Appendix 1; and 2. appoints councillors to individual committees and panels, as identified in Appendix 2 (to follow), for the remainder of the four year period ending May 2027.
Reasons for recommendations	To comply with the provisions of Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, relating to the duty to allocate seats to political groups, as part of the Council’s annual review.
Wards	All
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Jill Cleary, Leader

Strategic Director	Alan Bethune, Corporate Resources and Transformation (S151)
Officer Contacts	<p>Matt Wisdom Assistant Director – Strategy and Engagement 023 8028 5072 Matt.wisdom@nfdc.gov.uk</p> <p>Tanya Coulter Assistant Director – Governance (Monitoring Officer) 023 8028 5532 Tanya.coulter@nfdc.gov.uk</p>

Introduction and background

1. In accordance with Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, it is necessary to review the representation of political groups on committees, when the authority holds its Annual Meeting. For this purpose, “committees” includes the Council’s Overview and Scrutiny Panels but excludes the Cabinet.
2. There are four statutory principles of political balance which have to be applied in filling appointments to committees. These are contained in Section 15(5) of the Act.
3. The principles that have to be applied are as follows:-
 - (a) that not all seats on the body are allocated to the same political group;
 - (b) that the majority of the seats on the body are allocated to a particular political group if the number of persons belonging to that group are a majority of the Authority’s membership;
 - (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 seats on the body which are allocated to each political group bears the same proportion to the same number of all seats on

that body as is borne by the number of members of that group to the membership of the Authority.

4. Once the Council has determined the allocation of committee places between the political groups, the Council must then appoint the nominees of the political groups to the committees.
5. Those members who are not members of political groups have no legal entitlement to an allocation of seats on committees. However, once the political groups' entitlement has been reached, any remaining seats may be filled by members not belonging to a political group. Such Members are classed as being non-aligned.
6. These provisions need not be applied if a different position is agreed without any member of the authority voting against.
7. It should be noted that, although the legislative position refers to "political" groups, this also includes the Independent Group. Although not affiliated with a political party, the Independent Group have formed a group in accordance with the legislation.

Current position

8. The political balance of the Council now stands as follows:-

Conservative Group	26	(54.17%)
Liberal Democrat Group	14	(29.17%)
Independent Group	4	(8.33%)
Green Group	2	(4.17%)
Labour and Co-operative (Non-aligned)	1	
Non-aligned	1	
<hr/>		
Total	48	
<hr/>		

Appointments to committees and panels

9. There are 84 seats to which appointments should be made under the principles of proportionality.
10. The application of the percentages outlined at paragraph 8 provides for the following allocation of whole seats to political groups across the overall Council position:-

Conservative Group	46
Liberal Democrat Group	25
Independent Group	7
Green Group	4
Unallocated	2
<hr/>	
Total	84

11. Having regard to the overall position outlined at paragraph 10, the application of the percentages outlined at paragraph 8 requires the rounding up or down of calculated figures to give whole numbers on committees. The Council should, as far as practicable, ensure fairness on each committee, including across the wider allocation in making these adjustments, whilst taking into account the proportionality rules in their stated order, as far as practicable.
12. The final recommended allocations are identified at Appendix 1.
13. At the last review undertaken in February 2025, the Council also resolved to allocate seats to the non-aligned Members on the Appeals Committee, and the Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel. The Council's Constitution makes provision for the allocation of seats to Members who are not members of a political group, as nearly as possible in proportion to the number of those members on the Council. It remains the case that a seat each can be allocated to the two non-aligned Members, having first complied with the legislative principles for the allocation of seats.
14. The nominees of the political groups to the committees and panels will be circulated to follow at Appendix 2. It should be noted that if Members seek to make any amendments, this may affect the calculations and subsequently the nominees.

Corporate plan priorities

15. The recommendations support the Council in delivering all corporate plan priorities by maintaining the Council's ability to function as a collective body in accordance with relevant legislation.

Options appraisal

16. The Council can choose to agree an alternative allocation that does not satisfy the proportionality requirements, providing that this is agreed without a single Member of the Council voting against.

Consultation undertaken

17. Consultation has been undertaken with the Council's Statutory Officers, the Portfolio Holder (Leader) and all other Group Leaders.

Financial and resource implications

18. There are no financial or resourcing implications arising specifically from this report.

Legal implications

19. The proportionality requirements, as outlined in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 have been followed in reaching the recommendations.

Risk assessment

20. It is not deemed necessary to complete a formal risk assessment in respect of this procedural report.

Environmental / Climate and nature implications

21. There are no environmental or climate and nature implications arising directly from the review of political proportionality.

Equalities implications

22. There are no equalities implications arising, although the process of reviewing proportionality ensures that the democratically elected position of the Council is reflected in the Council's approach to committee and panel business.

Crime and disorder implications

23. There are none arising from this report.

Data protection / Information governance / ICT implications

24. There are none arising from this report.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Table of allocations
Appendix 2 – Appointments to
Committees and Panels (Wishes of
the Political Groups) – to follow.

Background Papers:

Local Government and Housing
Act 1989

Allocation of seats – committees and panels

Committee / Panel	Seats	Cons	Lib Dems	Inds	Greens	Non-aligned
Appeals Committee	13	7	4	1	0	1
Audit Committee	9	5	2	1	1	-
General Purposes and Licensing Committee	13	7	4	1	1	-
HR Committee	9	5	3	1	0	-
Planning Committee	13	7	4	1	1	-
Housing and Communities O&S Panel	9	5	3	0	0	1
Place and Sustainability O&S Panel	9	5	2	1	1	-
Resources and Transformation O&S Panel	9	5	3	1	0	-
Total	84	46	25	7	4	2

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