

## **REVIEW AND ALLOCATION OF SEATS TO COMMITTEES AND PANELS**

### **1. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1.1 That the number of seats on the Planning Committee be reduced from 20 to 16;
- 1.2 That the Council's Standing Orders relating to quorum be amended as outlined at paragraph 2.3 of this report;
- 1.3 That the allocation of seats to committees and panels in accordance with the principles set out in the report, be agreed as at the table at paragraph 4.6 of this report;
- 1.4 That the Council gives effect to the wishes of the political groups in making appointments to these Committees and Panels, for the remainder of the four year period ending May 2023;
- 1.5 That the effective date of the decisions above be 1 January 2022; and
- 1.6 That the Monitoring Officer be authorised to make the consequential changes to the Constitution arising from the above.

### **2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Two changes to the Council's governance arrangements are proposed in this report. These concern the size of the current Planning Committee and the quorum for meetings.
- 2.2 Advice has been sought from the Local Government Association Planning Advisory Service (PAS). The size of Planning Committees vary significantly from one Council to another but PAS recommend that for decision making purposes, a smaller committee is more effective. Whilst some committees are as small as 5 members, PAS advise that a maximum of 12 members is reasonable depending on the political balance, but that the optimum number is in the region of 9. Given the current size of the Planning Committee, a reduction to 12 or lower would seem too significant a reduction at this stage, and it is therefore proposed that the number of seats on the Council's Planning Committee be reduced from 20 to 16.
- 2.3 The Full Council quorum (that is the number of Members who must be present for business to be transacted at meetings) stands at one quarter of the total number of Members. At present, the quorum of other bodies including the Cabinet, Committees and Panels is one half of the whole number of the meeting. It is proposed that for consistency, the quorum for all Cabinet, Committee, Sub-Committee and Panel meetings is one quarter of the whole number of the body (or 3, whichever is greater). This gives the Council more resilience at meetings where historically one half of the whole number of committee members would need to be in attendance to transact any business. It also brings the quorum of Council Committees and Panels in line with the Full Council quorum.
- 2.4 An example of the above change in respect of the Planning Committee would mean the Committee, with 16 Members would be able to transact business if no fewer than 4 Members were in attendance.

- 2.5 In making changes to the number of seats on the Planning Committee, the Council must then review the representation of political groups on committees. For this purpose, “committees” includes the Council’s Overview and Scrutiny Panels but excludes the Cabinet. Following the recent vacancies on the Council, it is also necessary to review the representation of political groups on committees, having regard to the current number of Members on the Council at 58.
- 2.6 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 Local Government and Housing Act 1989.
- 2.7 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.
- 2.8 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.
- 2.9 Those members who are not members of political groups have no legal entitlement to an allocation of seats on committees. However, the political groups are entitled to their proportion of seats and once their entitlement has been reached, the remaining seats may be filled by members not belonging to a political group. Such Members are classed as being non-aligned.
- 2.10 These provisions need not be applied if a different position is agreed without any member of the authority voting against.

### **3. CURRENT POSITION**

- 3.1 The political balance of the Council stands at:-

Conservative Group 44 (75.86%)

Liberal Democrat Group 13 (20.69%)

Non-aligned Members 2

Vacancies 2

### **4. APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES AND PANELS**

- 4.1 Subject to the Council’s approval of recommendation 1.1 in this report, there are 107 Committee/Panel seats to which appointments should be made under the principles of proportionality.

- 4.2 The application of the percentages outlined at paragraph 3.1 provides for the following allocation of seats to political groups across the overall Council position:-

Conservative Group 81

Liberal Democrat Group 22

Unallocated 4

- 4.3 The application of the percentages outlined at paragraph 3.1 provides for the following allocation of seats to the individual Committees and Panels:-

<b>Committee/Panel</b>	<b>Seats</b>	<b>Conservative</b>	<b>Liberal Democrats</b>	<b>Unallocated Seats</b>
Appeals Committee	20	15	4	1
Audit Committee	8	6	2	-
General Purposes and Licensing Committee	15	11	3	1
HR Committee	8	6	2	-
Planning Committee	16	12	3	1
Community, Partnerships and Wellbeing O&S Panel	10	8	2	-
Corporate Affairs and Local Economy O&S Panel	10	8	2	-
Environment and Sustainability O&S Panel	10	8	2	-
Housing and Homelessness O&S Panel	10	8	2	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>82 (+1)</b>	<b>22 (-)</b>	<b>3 (-1)</b>

- 4.4 The allocation of seats to individual committees leaves an unallocated seat on each of the Appeals Committee, General Purposes and Licensing Committee and the Planning Committee. It also leaves the Conservative Group with an additional seat on the overall allocation, as at paragraph 4.2.
- 4.5 The Council could resolve to allocate a seat(s) to the non-aligned Members. 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. There are four seats that could be allocated to the two non-aligned Members, outside of those that should be allocated to the political groups.
- 4.6 Therefore, having regard to the overall position outlined at paragraph 4.2 and having received notification of a preference from the Conservative Group in adjusting their allocation, a recommended allocation of seats is outlined below:-

<b>Committee/Panel</b>	<b>Seats</b>	<b>Conservative</b>	<b>Liberal Democrats</b>	<b>Non-aligned</b>
Appeals Committee	20	15	4	1
Audit Committee	8	6	2	-
General Purposes and Licensing Committee	15	11	3	1
HR Committee	8	6	2	-
Planning Committee	16	12	3	1
Community, Partnerships and Wellbeing O&S Panel	10	8	2	-
Corporate Affairs and Local Economy O&S Panel	10	8	2	-
Environment and Sustainability O&S Panel	10	7	2	1
Housing and Homelessness O&S Panel	10	8	2	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>4</b>

4.7 The nominees of the political groups to the Committees and Panels will be circulated ahead of the meeting, alongside the preferences of the non-aligned Members.

## **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

## **6. CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 There are no crime and disorder implications arising directly from this report.

## **7. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 There are no environmental implications arising directly from this report.

## **8. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 Political balance ensures that Committees and Panels are representative of the wishes of the electorate.

### **For further information contact:**

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### **Background Papers:**

Local Government and Housing Act 1989